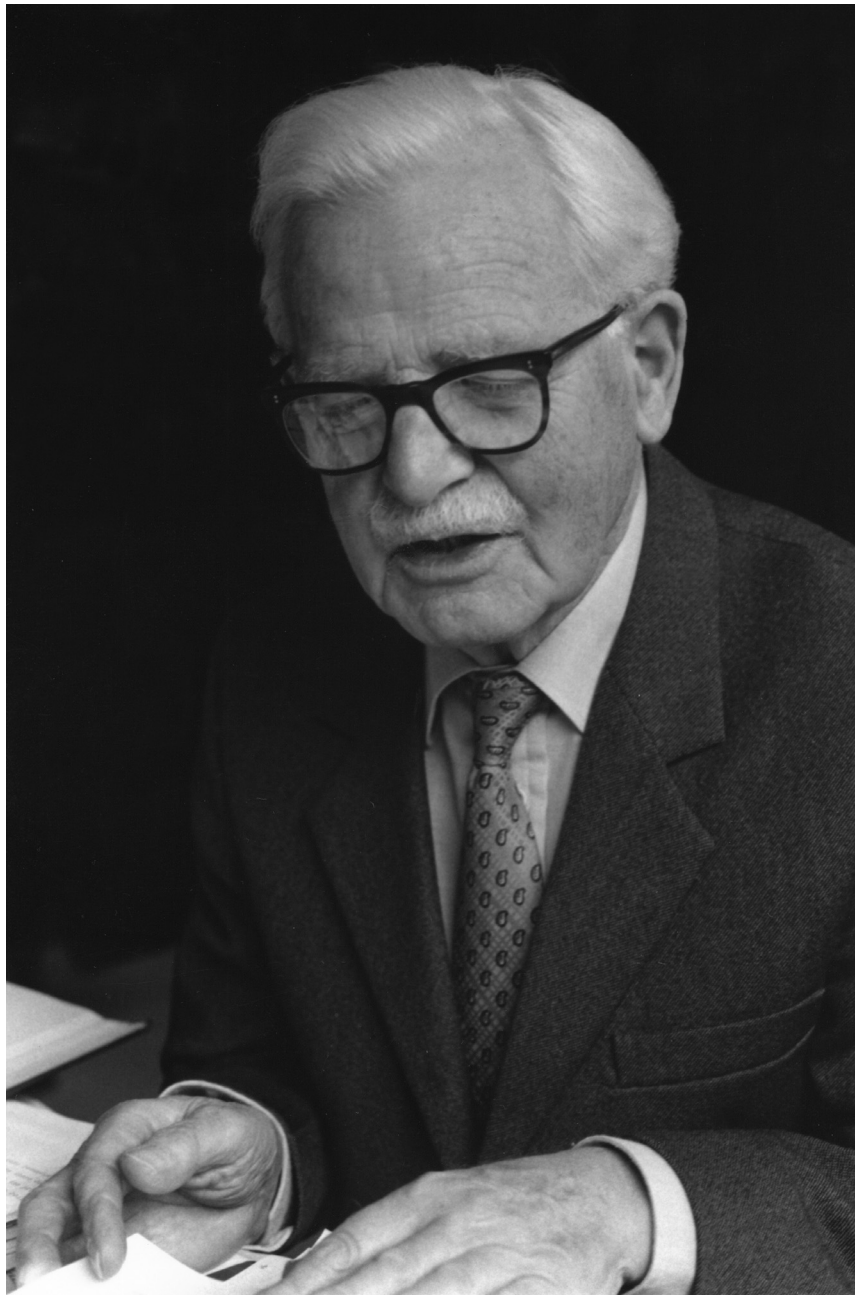

BRIAN WOLEDGE

Brian Woledge
1904–2002

BRIAN WOLEDGE, formerly Fielden Professor of French at University College London, who was elected a Senior Fellow of the Academy in 1989, died on 3 June 2002 at the age of 97, having devoted his professional life, with remarkable consistency of purpose, to understanding the Old French Language. His own aversion from any form of self-promotion may partly account for why the preparation of a memoir was delayed.

Brian Woledge, who during his long life would at first have expected to be called Woledge, but later happily embraced the growing tendency to employ Christian names, was born in Brixton on 16 August 1904, the second of three children, all of whom proved to be academically gifted, attended Leeds University, and were exceptionally long lived. Within four months, his parents Henry ('Harry') and Bessie ('Betty') moved with their sons to Leeds, directed there by the father's job as a commercial representative for the hosiery firm of Morleys, and thus Brian became a northerner, indeed a Yorkshireman, by adoption and throughout his life displayed many of the hallmarks and virtues of that tribe. His earliest memories were of 26 Reginald Terrace, Leeds, where he grew up. He derived from his parents a deep appreciation of the arts, particularly architecture and music, and later recalled that at university he tended to divide people into those who liked Bach, and the rest, whom he viewed as 'Philistines'. He became a very proficient pianist, playing pieces like Debussy's 'La cathédrale engloutie' to his father, and experienced something of a crisis when he found himself contemplating a concert career, before finally deferring to his teacher's warning that it was 'a heartbreaking business'. He played the piano throughout his life, sometimes accompanying his son, a flautist, and he loved playing chamber music

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with string colleagues. Two other early, and sustained, passions were walking (together with bird watching), and investigating languages. Until the end of his life, though far from interested in sport, he maintained the discipline of exercise, learning to swim when in his late eighties, and his curiosity about languages continued unabated, so that in the last decade of his life he was learning modern Greek. Both these interests were nourished at home and at school, the walking by his family and his schoolmate Alick Wilson, and languages by his brother Geoffrey (later Librarian of the London School of Economics), who would bring him books, on Greek or Hebrew for example, from the University Library, and later advised him to alter his programme of philological study by substituting for 'From Latin to Modern French' the title 'From Indo-European to Modern French'. Later when head of department at UCL Brian would encourage students to take options in Comparative Philology and in Phonetics. In the pursuit of such interests Brian's own commitment was absolute and unwavering and he rejoiced in sharing them. Shortly after leaving Leeds Boys Modern School in 1923 he planned and executed, with Alick Wilson, in whose company he had done many long walks, a journey on foot from Leeds to Llandudno, the two of them existing mostly on bread and cheese and taking their rest in farmers' barns. After a variety of minor mishaps they arrived in Portmadoc a day ahead of schedule; their reward was the use of a beach hut near Pwllheli for three weeks. And languages had not been forgotten. Brian was able to try out the Welsh he had learned, though the lack of response to his breezy 'Good morning' when entering Flint must have been dispiriting. Not too much so, though, for before long he would be studying Middle Welsh at University.

According to his own account Brian was not distinguished academically, except for a proficiency in French, but soon felt so avid a desire for university study that he competed for one of twenty university scholarships offered each year by the municipal authorities at Leeds. The first time round he was ill with a mastoid infection at the time of the examination and profited from the extra year by learning Greek, duly securing an award the following year. With a Senior City Scholarship he embarked on a BA with Honours in Modern Languages, English and French, but never totally abandoned his Greek, for later, when a professor in London, he would use it to make cryptic notes to himself on the interviews of candidates for admission to his department. By opting for the English scheme B at Leeds, with its emphasis on language, he was able in his second year to study medieval Welsh, the only undergraduate in the class,

whose teacher was J. R. R. Tolkien. At the end of the year Tolkien left Leeds for Oxford and was succeeded as Brian's teacher by the Professor of French, Paul Barbier, whose father had been Professor of French at Cardiff. Amongst fellow pupils at Leeds were Dorothy Knowles and J. S. Spink, later to become distinguished professors of French. Brian graduated with First Class Honours in the summer of 1926, the year of his father's death, and was awarded a University Scholarship for Research. November 1926 thus saw him as a student at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he rejoiced in the facilities and atmosphere of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, at which he attended the classes of masters like Mario Roques, Edmond Faral, Alfred Jeanroy—who were Old French experts—and the Celticist Joseph Vendryes. Characteristically Brian took to the warm-hearted simplicity of the latter rather than the rather acerbic loftiness of Roques, just as he vastly preferred the friendly intimacy of the École to the austerity of the Bibliothèque Nationale and the severity of its staff. Over sixty years later he recalled with gratitude his teachers in Paris who had in common not only great learning but also their friendliness, a complete absence of pretentiousness or pomposity. Appreciation of the architectural beauties of Paris and the pleasure derived from exploring the city on foot were, also predictably, notable features of his stay, which seemed to pass as quickly as had his three years at Leeds. Brian's scholarship lasted for only two years and, with his thesis still uncompleted, he sought to finance an extension of his stay in France, first by working as a Paris guide for the Workers' Travel Association and subsequently by becoming Assistant d'Anglais at the Lycée de Dijon where added to his duties were the functions of a *maître d'internat.* With ten hours of conversation classes per week he was able both to attend to the needs of his pupils, whom he praised as extremely *sympathiques* and cultivated, and to resume work on his thesis, the completion of which, however, still necessitated the taking of another post for a year—at a *lycée* in Paris. It was probably whilst he was in Dijon that, ever alert to the lure of new languages, he attended (from December 1928 to June 1929) a course in Czech language, a notebook of vocabulary and exercises from this time being found amongst his papers after his death.

In 1930, thesis completed ('mention très honorable'), the young scholar contemplated his future with greater equanimity, for he was armed with his first major publication, a study, dedicated to Paul Barbier, of the Arthurian verse narrative *L'Âtre périlleux* which constituted his *thèse de doctorat* of the University of Paris and was published by Droz (Paris, 1930). By today's standards its size is modest, but there is no

doubting the considerable labour that lay behind it. The author acknowledges his debt to Alfred Jeanroy and Mario Roques in the preparation of what was essentially a prolegomenon to the edition of *L'Âtre* which he published six years later.

After a number of unsuccessful applications—to Manchester, Durham, and Geneva—Brian was appointed to the three-year old University College of Hull which boasted 104 students (three French Final Honours students and one member of the First Year Honours class) who read for external degrees of the University of London. He adopted a suitably pioneering spirit and seems to have appreciated the friendly social life. But when his colleague F. C. Roe was appointed to the Carnegie Chair of French at Aberdeen, he went with him as Senior Lecturer. The translation from an extremely new university to an ancient one seems not to have disconcerted him in the least. The students were much more numerous—100 in the first year ('bajans' and 'bajanellas': cf. St Andrews 'bejants' and 'bejantines', from French *bec-jaune,* imported from the university of Paris). As compensation for the stiff, hierarchical protocol which was deeply rooted there, and largely antipathetic to Brian, the local dialect was a source of endless delight to this inveterate linguist, as was the architecture of Old Aberdeen and the beauty of the Scottish countryside. In 1933 Brian married Christine Mary Craven, daughter of a village schoolmaster, formerly a fellow student at Leeds reading French and economics, who had courageously become a factory inspector in Lancashire. The couple had a real country wedding in the village of Burniston. Their lifelong partnership was based on their remarkable equality of intelligence, character, and beliefs, as well as their shared passion for the natural world and for the imparting of knowledge to anyone willing to learn. In their fifties, they both took up driving, and derived great pleasure from touring English villages and parish churches. It was whilst they were in Aberdeen that their two children, Jane and Roger, were born, both of whom were to become students of science.

The Aberdeen days were thus ones of happiness and satisfaction. Brian had published a number of articles on manuscripts of Old French texts, thus foreshadowing the significant bibliographical work he was to achieve in London, and had done a considerable amount of work on a bibliographical study of French prose romances (which, amplified, was to see the light in 1954), further complemented by his transcription of the text of a little known thirteenth-century (*c.*1268) prose romance *Reinbert* (published in the journal *Medium Aevum*, 1939). Above all, he had published his critical edition of the Arthurian romance on which he had writ-

ten his Paris doctorate. This appeared in the series *Les Classiques français du moyen âge*, a milestone in that it represented one of the earliest appearances in the series (as vol. 76!) of the work of an Englishman. Rather unpredictably, his English precursors comprised three women: Mary Williams some years earlier (*La Continuation de Perceval*), G. Perrie Williams (*Le Bel inconnu*), and Elizabeth Francis (Wace's *Vie de sainte Marguerite*). H. J. Chaytor had published his edition of the troubadour Perdigon, but only Alfred Ewert, already Professor at Oxford, had published a romance (*Gui de Warewic*), the two volumes of which immediately preceded Brian's edition. The young Yorkshireman was thus in good company and clearly enjoyed the esteem of senior French colleagues. In his review of the monograph, Alfred Jeanroy had perceptively praised Brian's careful attention to detail, his critical alertness and acumen. In anticipating the critical edition which was to follow he permitted himself the suggestion that the editor slightly exaggerated the literary worth of the romance, an unwitting pointer to Brian's later insistence on proper literary appreciation. *L'Âtre* certainly merited renewed attention, for the only existing edition at that time dated from 1868, had appeared anonymously in a journal, based on the only manuscript known to the editor, which was actually one of three extant copies (one of the scribes rejoicing in the name Colin le Fruitier). Jeanroy's comments are a tribute to Brian's generosity of spirit and literary sensibility, as well as to his acuteness of intellect, both sources of the scholarly caution and even-handedness which throughout his career characterised and enhanced his work. The edition, conducted on Bédierist principles, suffers from the absence of notes, but the critical apparatus is extremely full. It is something of a puzzle that *L'Âtre périlleux* has generated so little interest since. Despite the prominence given to the figure of Gawain, the work received hardly a mention in K. Busby's monograph *Gauvain in Old French Literature* (Amsterdam, 1980). A more recent edition, with English translation, by Nancy B. Black, in the Garland Library of Medieval Literature (New York, 1994) marks little, if any, advance on Brian Woledge's work, to which she is beholden throughout. On the other hand, the re-evaluation of the relations between the three manuscripts by Maurizio Virdis (2005), which shows some divergences from Brian's own assessment, is useful and is just the sort of investigation of which Brian would have approved. In all its essentials Brian's edition has stood the test of time—something which can be said of almost all his work.

Perhaps motivated by that strong sense of responsibility and the public-spirited confidence in taking decisions which were to mark his

thirty-two years as Head of Department in London, Brian started to look out for senior posts. In 1937 he applied for the Chair of French at University College, Nottingham where a fellow candidate was Leonard Tancock whose colleague he was to become at UCL and with whom he was to share a house when the London department was evacuated to Bangor during the Second World War. Around the same time he applied for the post of Professor of French at the University of Sheffield—he was thirty-two and clearly unstoppable. In 1939 at the age of 35 he was appointed Fielden Professor of French at University College London, the first non-French holder of the post (a mixed blessing), succeeding the admirable Louis Brandin (1901–39), who was married to the daughter of Paul Meyer, and had been recommended for the post by Meyer himself and by Gaston Paris.

The mobility which marked Brian's first ten years in academe was ironically to be continued on his arrival in London, for, as a result of the war, UCL was evacuated to various locations, some departments, including French, moving to Bangor. Thus Brian left 'The Grey House' in Berkhamsted for 'Angorfa' in Llanfairfechan, combining the duties of teacher and air-raid warden. One Sunday he and Tancock suffered the misfortune of seeing their clothes and shoes washed away by the tide as they were taking a dip and were compelled to run the gauntlet before a number of outraged chapel-goers. The war years naturally permitted little academic research save reviewing, and Brian contributed half a dozen reviews of editions of texts by such scholars as Whitehead, Reid, Legge and Ewert. He also took on the onerous task of writing the sections on French Courtly Literature, and Arthurian Literature for the *Year's Work in Modern Language Studies.* It was in 1943 that he experienced the pain of his mother's death. He had remained close to her, as to all members of his family.

He returned before the war was over to London, where UCL had suffered enormous bomb damage, on a scale which most other universities had been spared. There was morale building to be done, but in Messrs Stéphan, Jeaffreson, Tancock, Miss Starke and Mlle Schlumberger Brian had a devoted and effective team of teachers to cope with the exceptional demands of students returning from war service. In 1945 he and Chris moved to Speen Lodge, 36 Chiltern Road, Wendover where they were to stay until 1970, just before his retirement.

Though conservative and traditionalist in his undeviating commitment to certain scholarly values—thorough knowledge of primary materials, meticulous concern for accuracy, preservation of personal humility, undi-

luted concern for clarity of communication—Brian was also a reformer, with a shrewd sensitivity to undergraduate desires for change. At UCL the department admitted thirty single honours undergraduates per year, all of whom Brian interviewed himself. He introduced small group teaching, ensured that every period of French culture was covered by a distinguished specialist—D. P. Walker, M. Screech, V. P. Underwood, C. Smith, to name but a few—established the concept of the 'reading week' and 'conferences' at Missenden Abbey or Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park to integrate freshers into the department, a customary feature of which was The Walk, in which apparently without effort the Woledges would leave young hikers far behind. Brian also helped to achieve a new status for UCL's Bachelor of Arts degree making it independent of the University-based exam system. Further, he appointed a series of young French men and women as language and research assistants and initiated the compulsory term, then year, to be spent in France by the honours students. Further innovatory features were the division of the exam system into two parts, and assessment procedures were at least planned whereby finalists afflicted by troubles such as illness might still be awarded a classified degree rather than the *aegrotat*. Brian consulted widely among students, past and present, in his tenacious fight for his department to have its own examination board. In his own research, helped by his son Roger, he pioneered, as early as 1960, the use of the university's Atlas computer for gathering and analysing data concerning the morpho-syntax of Old French, publishing a number of candid accounts (in 1971 and 1978: the former in *Marche Romane* and the latter in *Computers and Medieval Data Processing*) of his experiences with the computer in which he did not conceal his disappointments whilst remaining fundamentally optimistic. Though far from being a revolutionary or iconoclast, Brian the rationalist could always find causes worth fighting for and identify desirable improvements. He was never subservient to the status quo.

Brian Woledge's academic credo can best be gleaned from his reviews, which always began by presenting unreservedly the positive aspects of the author's achievement, just as he strove always to see the best in people in his personal life. Then he would point out, politely but sometimes trenchantly, imperfections which, following his exigent view of the discipline, required to be remedied. Whilst unfailingly courteous, Brian was scrupulously honest to his readers about any aspect of a publication which he judged to be inadequate. In his account of the edition of the Arthurian prose romance *Erec* by a scholar who was later to become a Professor in a northern university of which Brian had had personal experience, he

pointed to much inaccuracy and 'serious shortcomings'. Commenting on the editorial work of a young American scholar he remarked that '[X]'s work shows a good deal of promise and enthusiasm . . . but it must be said frankly that he should improve his grammatical equipment, which at present is barely sufficient for the very large project he has undertaken'; of another, '[The editor] has undertaken a task for which he was not qualified.' He added an appeal for more rigorous standards of editing: 'Perhaps we may hope that standards will rise in the years ahead. For this to happen, editors must be properly trained, reviewers must speak out boldly when they see inferior work, and editors of series must refuse to handle work that does not reach a proper standard.' Finally, in a highly critical review of an American edition of an Old French text occurred a statement which achieved the status of an epigram: 'The truth is that, if you want to edit an Old French text, you must first learn Old French.' Brian spent his entire career learning Old French.

But he was not always so critical. At times fair-mindedness might veer on the side of positive generosity. For a scholar who had no formal links with Oxford, it was certainly fair-minded to call the Festschrift for Alfred Ewert a 'well-deserved tribute to a great scholar', but singularly benevolent to conclude his review with the following words: 'The contents of the volume bear eloquent testimony to the flourishing condition of Old French Studies in Oxford and under the inspiration of Oxford. It is a most appropriate tribute to Professer Ewert, whose inspiration and example have contributed so much to this state of affairs.' These remarks are particularly gracious since London had stars of its own, there was no consideration of the cost of filling the Sub-Faculty of French at Oxford with medievalists, and no attention drawn to the fact that for some of the contributors this was almost their only outing into the world of published academic research. With similar warmth, though himself undemonstrative and not given to displays of emotion, Brian reviewed a Festschrift for Carlo Pellegrini (1963) 'whose work and personality', he declared 'command universal admiration and affection'. His support was always based on sound judgement and, sometimes, on moral courage as well. At a famous colloquium (Liège, 1957) on the literary technique of the *Chansons de geste* Brian was the sole invited British contributor, giving the first paper—on the literary value of the *Moniage Guillaume*, to which he was to return forty years later—in which he praised the work of Jean Rychner, which at that time was encountering fierce criticism in some quarters.

For all his philological expertise and devotion to editorial principles, Brian never lost sight of what he considered to be one of an editor's prime duties, namely to convince his reader of the literary merit of the work he was editing, referring, in a review of Whitehead's edition of the *Chanson de Roland*, to 'the regrettable tendency of some scholars to treat Old French literature from the purely philological angle'. Equally, he regretted the absence in T. B. W. Reid's celebrated edition of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* of any discussion of that romance's literary qualities: 'Medieval Studies in our universities are bound to be lop-sided until aesthetic judgements claim their full share of attention.' In the spirit of Woledgian frankness it might be recorded as mildly ironic that his treatment of the literary qualities of this text in his last work, the commentary he published in 1986/8, was generally regarded as the weakest part of his contribution. Whilst certainly not arrested at the 'beau vers!' style of criticism, Brian's aesthetic judgements were couched in rather unadventurous, impressionistic terms—*charmant* was a frequently used epithet. A similarly general and subjective vocabulary characterises his remarks on rhythm in Chrétien's *Yvain* which appeared in the Festschrift for Armel Diverres (1983), but there was never any doubt about the importance to be attached to aesthetic questions. Rarely polemical, but as a man of conviction, Brian went further in his evaluation of an edition of the *Vie de saint Alexis*, a work he does not seem to have held in high regard, by stressing once again the importance of dealing with the issue of literary value, concluding 'Unless editors can resign themselves to dealing with essential points such as these, we must expect students to complain about the compulsory study of Old French: in so doing they will merely be showing their good sense.' When such expectations were satisfied, he was quick to show his pleasure. He begins a review of Delbouille's edition of the *Lai d'Aristote*, 'It is refreshing to find a medieval French text presented frankly to the reader as a piece of literature.' As can be seen, Brian did not shirk scholarly judgements, but he was unfailingly fair-minded and never over-awed by rank. In eulogising the work of John Orr ('Let us have more of this Philology') he nevertheless gently chided him for his somewhat dismissive remarks on structuralism, recognising with his usual independence that, in the right hands (always an important qualification), the structuralist approach and analysis could supply valuable new insights. This could not conceal, however, the real source of his admiration for Orr: 'everything he writes is controlled by unremitting common sense'. The same may be said of his own writing.

Fortified by such principles and after the resumption of normal conditions at UCL Brian Woledge got into his stride and began a series of major publications, which, as was usual with him, were never released until he had made a number of small, preparatory studies. His *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500* appeared in 1954 (Geneva), and was reprinted in 1975 alongside a *supplément* covering the intervening years. The original edition was widely praised for its accuracy and for the editor's patience and pertinacity in assembling 190 items. Jacques Monfrin greeted the supplement with the words 'Le Répertoire de M. Woledge est l'un des plus utiles instruments de travail dont nous disposons. Le plan des notices est si judicieusement calculé, l'information si complète et précise, les tables si pratiques qu'il a parfaitement résisté à l'épreuve du temps.' This is a fitting judgement on all Brian's bibliographical work. Ten years later, with the collaboration of H. P. Clive, he produced a *Répertoire des plus anciens texts en prose française depuis 842 jusqu'aux premières années du XIIIe siècle* (Geneva, 1964). This, too, was invariably well received. In an extensive introduction of some forty-five pages Brian displayed to the full his admirable powers of synthesis and offered a satisfying overview to balance the alphabetical listing (by author or title) of eighty-five items, the majority from the period 1190–1210. In the context of such approbation Brian's disinclination to provide folio references remains puzzling: there is no doubt that both the *Bibliographie* and the *Répertoire* would have gained considerably from their inclusion, as would his final *Commentaire sur Yvain* (Geneva, 1986/8). All the strands of Brian's research are interwoven. The *Répertoire* was the origin of the census of twelfth-century MSS containing Old French, which was completed by Ian Short and published in 1981 (*Romania*, 102). The introduction contains all the hallmarks of the Woledgian enterprise: it is a sketch for an 'étude globale'—'c'est là évidemment un projet ambitieux et de longue haleine, dont la réalisation exige dès l'abord des fondements solides et dignes de confiance'. It is currently being developed into a major monograph which will more than satisfy its instigator's hopes.

Because of his gift for lucid communication based on common sense, Brian could always be relied on to contribute an authoritative survey of the subject he might be invited to consider. When the Shell Transport and Trading Company, to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee, produced in 1957 a handsome volume of studies entitled *The Scallop*, with contributors ranging from Sir Mortimer Wheeler to Paul Gaultier (translated by Sir Gavin de Beer), Brian wrote a neat, entirely non-technical, piece on the

semantic history of the word shell. Later, in the nineteen-fifties, when Professor Hatto was putting together his magnificent survey *Eos. An Enquiry into the Theme of Lovers' Meetings and Partings at Dawn in Poetry* (The Hague, 1965), Brian provided a remarkably comprehensive account, with texts and translations, of Provençal *albas* and Old French *aubes* ('dawn-songs') in which a great deal of technical information is digested, and presented in an easily assimilatable form. It was from this same period that, with the skilled and devoted assistance of his wife, Brian published *The Penguin Book of French Verse: Volume I—to the Fifteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1961), which yet again illustrates his powers of reliable synthesis (in the Introduction) and judicious choice, coupled with a scrupulous concern for accuracy of detail, qualities which no doubt led to the reprints of 1966 and 1968, and subsequently to the revised edition incorporating the work's four volumes (1975, reprinted 1977, 1980). Unsurprisingly, given his long-standing concern for the centrality of aesthetic considerations in the appreciation of Old French literature, he states clearly that the poems in the anthology have been chosen for their artistic merit. Far from disdaining Anglo-Norman, he is enlightened enough to say that 'Old French poetry of the twelfth century is a part of the literature of England' and, as a non-religious person, fair enough to write 'deep religious feeling may well up in almost any work, however much we label it secular'. Surprisingly, there is no indication of the scholarly provenance of the texts, so that the reader may have some difficulty in following up the extracts in a complete text. How much re-editing Brian engaged in it is therefore impossible to say.

Brian's endless enthusiasm for communicating in straight, no-nonsense language the results of his researches was matched by a seemingly endless patience in the collection of data which recognised that the task (of a complete account of Old French syntax) could not be achieved by one person or one life-time, and by a refusal to come to premature or overstated conclusions. His pursuit of reliable data led him to make a number of studies of the Champenois scribe Guiot, the copyist of MS BNF fr.794 which contains all the works of Chrétien Troyes, Benoît's *Roman de Troie*, Wace's *Brut*, *Les Empereurs de Rome* by the champenois cleric Calendre, and *Athis et Prophilias*; and to the realisation that a reduction of scope was inevitable—hence his concentration on the syntax of the noun which, after a series of preliminary articles, was issued, eight years after his retirement, in *La Syntaxe des substantifs chez Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva, 1979). There the whole textual problem of working on Chrétien is adumbrated, but no summary conclusions offered. 'Ne pas conclure'

was a position forced on Brian by his awareness of how little is known about Old French grammar based on reliable sources. What emerges clearly is his dogged faith in the necessity for this type of work, whatever the frustrations and lack of glory. In the pursuit of the truth no form of help was rejected. I remember once at an Arthurian Round Table suggesting, with the brashness of youth, that it was not the purpose of a scholarly society to publish translations. Brian gently disagreed, declaring that he often consulted translations and found them helpful adjuncts to his efforts to understand Old French, a statement typical of the humility of a true servant of his discipline.

Perhaps the most difficult of all Brian's work to assess is his last work, a continuous commentary called simply *Commentaire sur Yvain (Le Chevalier au Lion) de Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva, 2 vols., 1986/8). The conception of the work is somewhat old-fashioned. It is a series of observations, covering many aspects of the text, made *au fil de la lecture* with no other organising principle and with no indices. It is therefore rather difficult to find what one is looking for, the more so since in both volumes, as Brian acknowledges, 'Mes remarques portent sur des sujets très variés.' One reviewer likened it to 'a medieval compendium of marginalia, a vernacular gloss of a Latin manuscript', whilst admiring the contents, and another referred to the awkwardness of consultation, which it was hoped would be resolved with the publication of a set of indices. On the other hand, it must be appreciated that the work represents a personal triumph over failing eyesight which, as he tells us, prevented Brian from proceeding to a third volume and treating problems of structure, interpretation, language and dating. The *Commentaire* is also old-fashioned in its constant reporting of the work of Wendelin Foerster, T. B. W. Reid, and Jean Frappier, the result no doubt of Brian's scrupulous fair-mindedness in crediting the work of others. The same may be said for that even-handedness which made him reluctant to push his own opinions or suggest definitive conclusions. Whatever reservations one might have about the organisation of the work as a running commentary, there is never any doubt about the *bien-fondé* of his personal contribution, the fruit of sixty years of engagement with the text, for *Yvain* marks the point of convergence of many of his interests, displayed in earlier publications: the characteristics of the *champenois* scribe Guiot, problems of editing, Chrétien's care for rhythm in *Yvain.* Above all one notes the consistency of Brian's interest in the Old French language (studied on the basis of the best model, of course) over more than half a century:

> [Certains lecteurs] me reprocheront peut-être d'avoir voulu approfondir des questions de langue ou de critique textuelle. Mais, en ce qui concerne la grammaire et le vocabulaire, il faut noter que nous connaissons encore bien imparfaitement l'ancien français et que l'examen d'un texte comme celui-ci nous offre une belle occasion de préciser la valeur des tours, de distinguer les nuances de vocabulaire, en un mot d'essayer de comprendre comment un grand écrivain du XIIe siècle exploitait la langue. (vol. 1, p. viii)

The *Commentaire* contains a substantial section on the language of Guiot, but in general it has a compilatory and provisional quality which deprives it of any striking originality. What we have here is the product of a conservative and cautious scholar rather than an innovating prospector. Ideally Brian's knowledge would have been distilled in an annotated edition. As it stands the *Commentaire* represents valuable materials for an edition; it might more fittingly have borne the title *Towards a New Edition of 'Yvain'* and have been shorn of the reported opinions and interpretations which by no means imposed themselves. Nevertheless with the conclusion of this work, Brian could feel that he had amply accomplished the task he had set himself, that of teaching us, and himself of course, Old French. Among those he had already taught individually may be mentioned Madeleine Blaess, Leslie Brook, Sally Burch, Renee Curtis, Oliver Goulden, Lynette Muir, Barbara Sargent(-Baur), and Ian Short who all made their mark in Medieval French studies. Other notable pupils and colleagues were Ron Asher, David Cox, Gordon Hall, Clifford King, and Patrick Chaffey at the University of Oslo. He supervised his niece, Julia Woledge, for her 1976 London thesis.

Brian Woledge was a man of sincere humility who never sought personal recognition or fame. Happily he did not refuse certain invitations. In 1967 he was for some months Andrew Mellon Visiting Professor at the University of Pittsburgh and three years later received an honorary doctorate from the University of Aix-en-Provence. After his retirement he was a Leverhulme Emeritus Research Fellow 1972–3 and 1973–4, and in 1989 was elected to Senior Fellowship of the Academy. He received a Festschrift from colleagues and students to mark his eightieth birthday (*Studies in Medieval French Language and Literature presented to Brian Woledge in honour of his 80th Birthday*, edited by Sally Burch North, *Publications romanes et françaises*, CLXXX, Geneva, 1988). He was long a devoted member and officer of the British Branch of the International Arthurian Society.

On his retirement in 1971 Brian built in his garden a practical, Scandinavian style house with plenty of room in which he and Chris

could continue their ready, cheerful hospitality to friends, colleagues and visitors of all kinds. A man of varied enthusiasms, which included history, architecture, music, and the novels of Trollope, he had little interest in practical activities other than gardening, love of which he had shared with his father. Walking and travel (Portugal, Italy, Australia) remained major pleasures into old age, when he would visit Greece, for example, in the company of his wheelchair. He was a man of broad, unshowy culture, the arts playing an important part in his appreciation of life. Politically he was committed to the Labour party and Fabianism: religion had he none (both he and his wife chose to have humanist funerals). He had been particularly proud that UCL was one of the first universities to admit students without any form of religious test. The outstanding characteristic of Brian Woledge was his fair-mindedness, which was based on his innate courtesy, which he showed to all without fear or favour, and on his total commitment to rational enquiry. As a natural and ardent teacher his guiding star was clarity: all forms of obfuscation were anathema to him, and all his writings displayed a wholly natural simplicity. To newly appointed lecturers he would make no secret of his whole-hearted subscription to the pedagogical method which can be summarised as: 'First tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them.' Opening up new horizons for others, as much to the less able as to the gifted, afforded him the deepest satisfaction. In terms of scholarly interests and principles, as well as his lack of religion, Woledge had a great deal in common with T. B. W. Reid, erstwhile editor of *Yvain* and Professor of Romance Philology at Oxford, who was equally devoted to advancing knowledge rather than opinion and had no interest in self-promotion. It was singularly appropriate, therefore, that Brian contributed a piece on the editing of *Yvain* to Reid's second, and posthumous, Festschrift in 1984, just as his own writing career was drawing to a close. Brian Woledge was anything but a showman; undemonstrative, measured, concentrated, determined, self-sufficient, quietly confident. In retirement he displayed inner strength of a quite exceptional kind, not least on the death of Christine, who had been his equal in all things; a devoted wife, matching her husband in intelligence and good sense, a hostess of wit and charm. After the happiest of marriages which lasted over fifty years, her affliction by Alzheimer's disease (she died in 1993) was a catastrophic blow which Brian faced with a fortitude which was no less remarkable for being wholly characteristic of him. Together they had entertained friends and visitors from all parts of the world, lent their services enthusiastically to a variety of organisations, from the Workers

Educational Association (Brian was chair of the Wendover branch for some years) to Meals on Wheels, and when they became dependent on a series of Oxford Aunts, from Australia and New Zealand, the Woledges helped them by introducing them to new subjects, places, and job opportunities, for they were givers by nature. They were, indeed, as a friend expressed it, 'a rare couple'.

Brian Woledge has been variously described as 'a quietly remarkable man', 'the embodiment of decency', 'a person of unquestionable integrity', 'truly modest and unassuming, entirely without conceit or pretension', 'gentle, determined, good company with a good sense of humour', 'supremely rational', 'unflinching in courage and kindness'. If he could be described as a scholar of the old school, it only shows how much the old school has to teach us.

TONY HUNT
Fellow of the Academy

Note. In my desire to secure recognition for the human and scholarly accomplishments of Brian Woledge, I have been immeasurably helped by the unstinting cooperation of his niece and daughter-in-law Dr Julia Woledge, and of his erstwhile pupil and colleague Dr Gwyneth Wilkie (née Tootill), as well as recollections from my colleague Professor Ian Short. I thank them warmly.