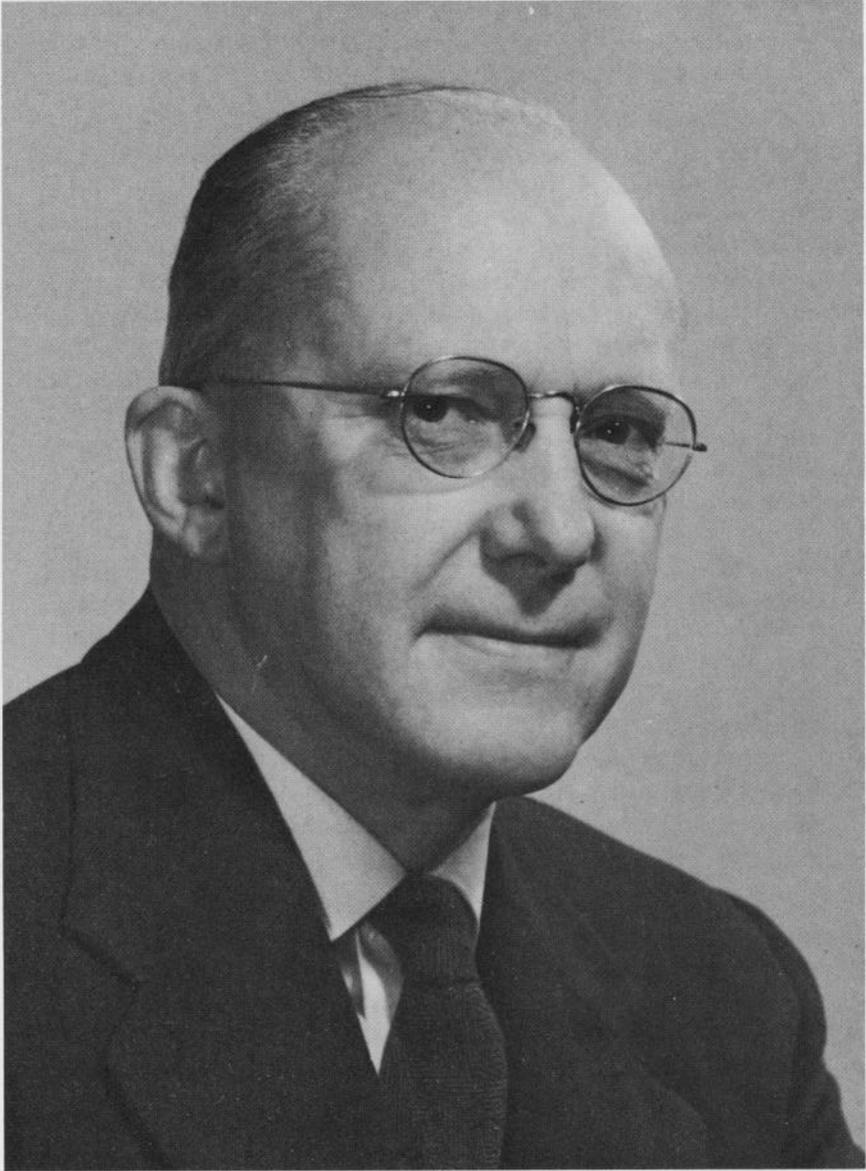


PLATE XXVI



GEOFFREY BULLOUGH

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1901-1982

GEOFFREY BULLOUGH was born in Prestwich on 27 January 1901. He was the son of James Arthur Bullough, the buyer for a wholesale warehouse in Manchester. Geoffrey attended the Stand Grammar School, Whitefield, and proceeded, by way of the Teacher Training Department, to study English Language and Literature at Manchester University. He obtained six alphas on his seven finals papers in 1922 and was awarded First Class Honours. In the previous year he had been awarded the Gissing Prize. For his MA he wrote a thesis on Walter Pater. He was allowed to work for his MA at the same time as his work for the Teachers' Diploma, and he was awarded both in 1923, together with the Withers Prize in Education and the John Bright Fellowship. This enabled him to study in Italy and some chapters of his thesis were written there and sent back to his supervisor, Professor Charlton.

On his return to England, Bullough spent two years as English master at Tamworth Grammar School and then, in 1926, he was appointed to an assistant lectureship at Manchester University. Two years later he married a Manchester graduate, who came of a Scottish Presbyterian family, Doris Margaret Wall. There were two offspring of the marriage, a son and a daughter, and it also proved to be a fruitful academic partnership.

During his three years at Manchester Bullough was working on his edition of the *Philosophical Poems* of Henry More (published in 1931) and he soon acquired a reputation as a lecturer and tutor. He took part in reading parties and his students found that he was personally interested in their development, and they found him more approachable than Professor Charlton.

In 1929 Bullough was appointed to a lectureship at Edinburgh University and Professor Grierson showed his confidence by enlisting him as a collaborator in the editing of *The Oxford Book of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, an anthology published in 1934, which after half a century is still the best introduction to the poetry of the period. The editors avoided the complete modernization followed by E. K. Chambers in *The Oxford Book of Sixteenth-Century Verse* and they sought for a *via media* 'between complete modernization in spelling and punctuation and a transcription of all the varied

forms used by seventeenth-century poets and printers'. They avoided the latter course because the book was not intended merely for the specialist.

Bullough's lectures at Edinburgh were carefully prepared, but not pedantically delivered. One former student¹ recalls that

they always had streaks of originality or flashes of ideas and correlations that one wouldn't find in literary histories or the ordinary critical works. He would hunch a little over the lectern on which his notes were placed, and encircle the lectern with his arms as he spoke. He always looked at the audience, not down at his notes, as he talked. I can see him yet, looking with a barely repressed smile through his gold-rimmed glasses. The barely repressed smile was to be seen in connection with his deliberate quotation, often at considerable length and in a deadpan 'scholarly' manner, of risqué bits of literature, especially Restoration Comedy on which he lectured regularly. He was quite famous among the students for his reading of these quotations. In those days people were much less frank than they are now, but in the early 1930s Bullough was considered very daring. I well remember his rendering of the scene from *The Country Wife* with Mr Horner and his china.

These lectures were delivered to the First Ordinary Class and we are told 'that the young ladies who occupied the front row, imbibed open-mouthed the excellent criticism of the Restoration playwrights'. We are told also that he used to give his Honours students cyclostyled notes on difficult topics, such as the problems connected with the bad quarto of *Hamlet*.

This information comes from a valedictory article in *The Student*, in which he is warmly congratulated for his appointment to the Sheffield chair:²

Throughout his stay at Edinburgh he preferred to be thought of rather as an appreciator of literature than as a prober of minutiae; yet his knowledge of detail was profound and comprehensive, and on one somewhat neglected school of poet-philosophers, the Cambridge Platonists, he was an undoubted authority.

The same writer spoke of his 'deceptively ingenuous countenance and his seraphic smile'. He was, in fact, nicknamed 'the Cherub', but he had a vein of impish humour.

Bullough was only thirty-two when he succeeded B. Ifor Evans in the Sheffield chair. Although he was not over-ambitious, he had ideas about the running of a department and he was delighted to be his own master. He got on well with his colleagues, as one might

¹ Professor David Daiches.

² 17 October 1933.

expect. There was no friction between English Language and Literature, as there was at Leeds about this time. He had close friends in other departments including Clapton (French), Krebs (biochemistry), and Laing (Philosophy). He was particularly helpful to new members of staff, advising them on their teaching, and urging on their research. 'Do something dull and scholarly', he told one colleague, 'and then do what you like'. He continued to take an interest in their careers after he left Sheffield.

His major academic achievement at Sheffield was his great edition of Fulke Greville's *Poems and Dramas* (1939). But he was remembered by his students for his multifarious knowledge. He had written an appreciative book on modern poetry, based on extramural lectures: *The Trend of Modern Poetry* (1934; enlarged edition 1949). He could speak on the relationship between art and literature, music and literature, on the Darwin controversy, on mesmerism, on minor Victorian novelists, on William Morris, and on detective stories. He found time to be vice-chairman of the Sheffield Repertory Theatre during the difficult years 1938 to 1946 and he supported Ronald Freeman of the Little Theatre settlement.¹ He gave regular lecture-courses to the WEA. He revived the branch of the English Association.

The Sheffield years were shadowed by the threat of Nazi Germany and the civil war in Spain. The Bulloughs' political views, though quietly expressed, were firm and unequivocal, and they did not confine themselves to theory. They took in a refugee child from Germany. When war broke out, Geoffrey joined the STC as an instructor, giving, it is said, 'a surprisingly amusing lecture on poison gases'. What was perhaps an even greater contribution to the war effort was the regular letters he wrote to former pupils serving in the armed forces. Those who received these letters looked forward to them with eager anticipation.

Soon after the war, in 1946, Bullough was appointed to the chair at King's College, London, a position he held until his retirement in 1968. He told a former colleague, whom he encountered in London, that 'Sheffield was a good place to go to and a good place to leave'.

A professor in London University has less freedom than in Sheffield, but he has a wider influence. Bullough introduced a number of new courses, including the first BA course in American Literature. The number of graduate students increased during his tenure of the Chair, including many from abroad, attracted by

¹ He wrote on this in an article in *Modernist Studies* (University of Alberta, 1974).

his increasing reputation and by his foreign visits. For their benefit, and to alleviate the sense of isolation that often besets writers of theses in a strange university, he introduced fortnightly seminars.

Bullough looked after the development of young lecturers in his department by sitting in on their lectures and, where desirable, criticizing them. He was able to do this without arousing resentment, because of his obvious friendliness and good nature. Although he was once referred to as a benevolent despot, he never acted despotically; and if he nearly always got his own way, this was the result of convincing others by rational argument. He welcomed fruitful eccentricity. He allowed his colleagues to teach what they liked and how they liked; and he himself enjoyed teaching, and taught as much as anyone. Outside his department he continued to take an interest in adult education. He served continuously on the Board of Extra-Mural Studies; he directed its summer school in 1948 and again in 1950. More surprisingly, he was for sixteen years a governor of the Chelsea College of Science and Technology, for which he worked sympathetically and seriously.

By now Bullough had acquired an international reputation which was doubtless augmented by the many lecture tours he undertook for the British Council and the Foreign Office, if not from China to Peru, from India to South America, in France, Germany, Austria, Spain, and the Middle East. He visited Israel in 1975, where Harold Fisch, a former pupil of his, was professor. Here he took many photographs, so that he could exhibit the slides to a group of retired folk in Edinburgh. He also visited Khartoum as external examiner, on the invitation of a Sheffield colleague, W. A. Murray. He was taken, Professor Murray recalls,

to see Suakin at the beginning of the Haj, then to see some nomadic tribesfolk, friends of mine. The veiled and be-silvered women (famous for their beauty) gathered round the distinguished stranger, looked at him with teasing intrigued glances . . . Geoffrey remarked that he had not realized until then how effective the language of the eye could be. The nomads liked him at first encounter, not least for his quick and imaginative perception of a very ancient and alien way of life.

Bullough had three visits to North America, as Visiting Professor at Cornell University in 1954, to deliver the Alexander lectures in Toronto in 1959, and as Visiting Professor at Johns Hopkins in 1966. His international interests and his zeal for the advancement of English studies were exemplified in the part he took in the

foundation of IAUPE (The International Association of University Professors of English). He was secretary to the Organizing Committee set up in June 1949 to prepare a first international meeting. The first conference was held at Magdalen College, Oxford, towards the end of August in the following year, and this led to the setting up of an International Association. Bullough was coeditor with Professor Wren of the Proceedings of the Conference and he attended regularly the subsequent meetings, except in 1977 when he was ill.

Bullough's other commitments, time-consuming as they were, did not seriously interfere with his own research. His discussion of the early poems of Sir Richard Fanshawe appeared in *Anglo-Americana*, edited by Karl Brunner (1955), and he later edited Fanshawe's translation of *Os Lusitadas*, embodying for the first time many corrections made by the translator in a presentation copy. In collaboration with Margaret Bullough he produced an exemplary edition of *Milton's Dramatic Poems* (1958).

Two years earlier I myself had been approached by Routledge and Kegan Paul to advise them on the feasibility of their publishing a collection of Shakespeare's sources. I drafted a memorandum on the subject, but I remembered, and informed them accordingly, that in 1948 Bullough had listed 'Shakespeare's sources and analogues' as a work on which he was engaged. The publishers got in touch with him and the result was the monumental work of Bullough's 'London' period, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, completed after his retirement in eight large volumes. These included not merely the known and possible sources of the plays and poems, but also numerous analogues, and a detailed commentary on Shakespeare's methods of using source-material. The volumes extended to more than 3000 pages of texts and over 1000 pages of commentary.

The other book published during these years, *Mirror of Minds* (1962) is less successful. It grew out of Bullough's Warton lecture (1955) and the expansion of it for the Alexander lectures. It attempts to trace the influence of changing psychological ideas on English poetry from Chaucer to the present day. It is packed with multifarious information and it covers a much wider field than psychology. But one cannot survey twenty modern poets in a single chapter and some of the critical comments are rather perfunctory. The best chapters are on Renaissance ideas and on Shakespeare.

Bullough delivered the British Academy Shakespeare lecture in 1964 under the title of 'Shakespeare the Elizabethan'. After his

retirement he was made a Fellow of the British Academy (1969) and he received doctorates, *honoris causa*, from four universities—Manchester (1969), Glasgow (1970), Alfred (1974), Ghent (1980). Four articles in *Shakespeare Survey* (1970) were intended as a tribute to his contribution to Shakespearian scholarship.

On his retirement from King's College, he and his wife retired to Edinburgh, where he completed his *magnum opus*. He continued to lecture and attend conferences in England and abroad. He was for a while the general editor of the British Council pamphlets, 'Writers and their Work'. His activities were interrupted for a while by a stroke, from which he recovered; and he seemed in good health, working in a library, on the day before he died suddenly on 12 February 1982.

Bullough will be remembered both for his work on behalf of English studies, both in Britain and abroad, and also for his own contributions to scholarship, several of which are unlikely to be superseded. His edition of Fulke Greville's plays and poems is definitive—a third volume, edited by G. A. Wilkes (1965), made the rest of Greville's verse available—and his introduction tells the reader exactly what he needs to know to understand the poems. The edition of Milton's *Dramatic Poems*, judicious as it is, depended on the work of many previous scholars, whereas the interpretation of Greville had been largely neglected. The edition of Fanshawe's translation of *The Lusiads* makes a splendid volume, although the nature of the series in which it appeared permitted little annotation. But Bullough's masterpiece is his collection of Shakespeare's sources and analogues. In the concluding essay in the eighth volume, Bullough wrote an admirable apologia for the work to which he had devoted more than twenty-five years:

Above all, the comparative study of sources with the finished plays often lets us glimpse the creative process in action as he took over, remade, rejected, adapted, or added to chosen or given materials. Indeed, I would claim that this is the best, and often the only, way open to us of watching Shakespeare the craftsman in his workshop—not indeed of 'explaining' the mystery of his artistic genius, but at least of perceiving his constructive powers in operation, of seeing the ingenious collocations and associative energies which underlie the dynamic balance of the plays and which fuse plot, character, dialogue, and imagery into a poetic unity.

The volumes will remain as indispensable tools for the serious student of Shakespeare's craftsmanship and, as a reviewer remarked, Bullough deserved 'our gratitude for the patience, skill

and determination he had shown in carrying through his task to its conclusion’.

Those who knew Bullough as teacher, colleague, or friend had additional reasons for gratitude. There is general agreement about his outstanding gifts as a teacher, from his early days at Manchester and Edinburgh to his mature years at Sheffield and London. One of his Sheffield students¹ declared that he was a great teacher,

indeed the best I have known in any university, especially in the informal setting of a seminar or a class of forty or less where the teacher-student bond could be felt . . . He taught us to associate literature with the concerns of life, with the emotions of men and with the great movements of thought: and he did this without any sentimentality or false rhetoric. He had a deep feeling for the religious dimension of the texts he taught but in the end he left them to speak for themselves; he was not out to set up dogmas for the study of literature.

Professor Armstrong wrote similarly in the obituary he wrote for *The Times*

of a mastering ideal which could fittingly be described in Matthew Arnold’s words as ‘the disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that has been thought and said in the world’. His was a double achievement: to have embodied this ideal and to have communicated it, unforgettably, to four generations of university students, and to many others.

Bullough’s success with students depended partly on the warmth of his personality, his patience, his tolerance, his ‘unfailing awareness of the other person and the grace that went with it’. Bullough’s colleagues likewise testify to the way he inspired affection as well as admiration. He was the best of advertisements ‘of the humanizing effect of the proper study of literature’. He possessed

a quiet vigour and resilience which seemed proof against the years. His judgement of situations and character were acute, though most often expressed with humour and mildness.²

Bullough had naturally left-wing liberal views and he never forgot his social origins. But even though he was sometimes put off ‘by the ways and manners of some of the upper-class people in the profession’, he found it difficult to dislike people, however much he disagreed with their views. His sense of humour was profound and his curiosity about the human condition was deep. Underlying ‘the quizzical vein of humour was a deeply serious view of human life’.

¹ Harold Fisch.

² W. A. Murray.

These impressions of his character, culled from a number of different sources, will serve to illustrate the deep affection he inspired in a wide variety of people. He was not merely a great scholar; he impressed nearly all who knew him as a man of exceptional wisdom and loving-kindness, a life-enhancer.

KENNETH MUIR

Note. Among the many people who have helped me in the writing of this account of Geoffrey Bullough, I am particularly indebted to Mrs Margaret Bullough, Professor Harold Fisch, Professor David Daiches, Professor W. A. Murray, Miss Patricia Thompson, Dr Richard Proudfoot, Professor John Lawlor, and Professor R. M. Wilson.