

At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on May 20, 2008, the following tribute to the life and service of the late David Roy Shackleton Bailey was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.

DAVID ROY SHACKLETON BAILEY

BORN: December 10, 1917

DIED: November 28, 2005

David Roy Shackleton Bailey was born on December 10, 1917, in Lancaster, England. He attended the Lancaster Royal Grammar School, where his father was headmaster, and in 1935 began his studies at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he read Part I of the Classics Tripos, getting a first, with distinctions in Greek and Latin verse. Unusually, he then did Oriental Languages (Sanskrit and Pali) Part I, again getting a first. When the war came, like other brilliant classicists and linguists, he was recruited for work in Intelligence, including a stint at Bletchley Park, Bedfordshire; he was mainly engaged in translating Dutch and Turkish messages.

After the war, Shackleton Bailey returned to Cambridge, first as a fellow of his old college, where he later served as bursar, and then at Jesus College. From 1948 he was University Lecturer in Tibetan. His interest in that language and subject was said to have been in part motivated by an interest in the occult; rumors circulated that he taught the exiled Dalai Lama exotic forms of solitaire. In 1968 he moved to a Chair of Latin at the University of Michigan. He came to Harvard in 1976. From 1982 until his retirement in 1988, he was Pope Professor of the Latin Language and Literature. He returned to Ann Arbor, where he died on November 28, 2005.

In 1967, aged 50, Shackleton Bailey married Hilary Amis, following her divorce from the novelist Kingsley Amis. When she opened up a fish-and-chip shop in Ann Arbor called "Lucky Jim's," he would tend tables or work the cash register, resplendent in a white chef's apron. He was generally unsuited to domestic life, however, and the union did not last. Martin Amis recollecting those years, captures the less positive aspects: "Shack . . . was, I always thought, the diametrical opposite of my father: a laconic, unsmiling, dumpty-shaped tightwad. I used to say to myself: Mum's had enough of charm." Shackleton Bailey is survived by his second wife, Kristine Zvirbulis, whom he married in 1994, after his retirement to Ann Arbor.

“Shack,” as he was generally known and addressed, was a prodigious scholar, a towering figure in the textual criticism and editing of Latin literature, and a brilliant student of Roman Republican history and society. To say that his chief contribution was in the editing of a whole range of Latin texts only begins to describe the enduring importance of his work, which amounts to some 50 volumes and more than 200 articles and reviews. In the latter years of his retirement he produced a series of new translations of Valerius Maximus, Martial, Statius and other authors for the Loeb Classical Library, the comprehensive series of translations of Greek and Latin literature, published by Harvard University Press. His final, posthumous publications became volumes 500 and 501 of the Loeb Classical Library, thereby establishing him as its most prolific author.

Alongside A. E. Housman, Shackleton Bailey is recognized as one of the greatest scholars of Latin textual criticism in the twentieth century. Such expertise comes only through a deep immersion in the literary, historical, and social traditions in which the Latin language evolved. Shack’s combination of daunting intelligence, precise learning, brilliant wit, and broad cultural sensibility are unlikely to be seen again. His own prose style is eminently quotable. These are the qualities that tied him to Housman, and, with him, to Richard Bentley in the eighteenth century. All three of them possessed the power of textual *divinatio*, as it has been called, the ability to emend or explain texts which, in the course of their transmission, have become corrupted or opaque.

The name of Shackleton Bailey is most closely associated with that of Cicero (106–43 BC), whose letters (in their entirety) and speeches (selectively) he edited, with translation and commentary, in ten large volumes. Scholars, students, and (through later Penguin and Loeb Classical Library translations) the general educated reader, were, and continue to be, indebted to him, particularly for his work on Cicero’s letters—our best evidence for the twilight years of the Roman republic. Cicero’s correspondence, very little of which was ever intended for the public eye, reveals much about the most important orator—and, in many ways, thinker—of the Roman world. As Achilles was fortunate to find his poet in Homer, so Cicero is lucky to have found his interpreter in Shackleton Bailey. The letters bristle with literary and other jokes; with oblique references to persons, sometimes unnamed, for whom we have no other evidence; with allusions to political happenings of central importance, again known primarily or only from the letter in question. Brilliant at representing the idiom of this complex Roman statesman, poet, orator, philosopher, and theorist of rhetoric, Shackleton Bailey revealed the depth of his scholarly control of all aspects of Latin and of late Republican Rome, and so gave the world a Cicero who never meant us to read his correspondence, but who is infinitely more complex, sympathetic and, ultimately, more human for our being able to do so.

But Shack was also a colorful figure, a type unlikely to make it past the first search committee interview in the current orthodoxy. An eccentric figure by most standards—his regular attire was a grey suit and colorful sneakers long before the latter became part of the

academic's uniform—but mainly in the true and joyous sense of the word: quirky, difficult, cultured in profound and complex ways, endowed with a rare and keen sense of humor now cutting, now playful, a critic of human foibles and a man whose dedication to logic, reason, judgment, and the primacy of intelligence made those in his presence careful of their thoughts and words. Contrary to the popular assumptions and the evidence of his course evaluations, he was an effective and popular teacher to those few who were prepared to be taught, in the areas in which he had things to teach. In the classroom, as in his dealings in general, his scholarly magnitude led many to mistake an intense shyness for hostility, indifference or dismissal—attitudes that, admittedly, were not absent where he felt they were deserved. He was a great lover of cats; his greatest affection was for the first, the white cat Donum, to whom he dedicated the first volume of his edition of Cicero's letters, "more intelligent than most people I have encountered," as he once somewhat disconcertingly remarked. Anecdotes abound, and the work endures.

Respectfully submitted,

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