



JAMES SUTHERLAND

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## James Runcieman Sutherland 1900–1996

JAMES SUTHERLAND was born on 26 April 1900 in Aberdeen. His father, a stockbroker, emigrated to South Africa soon after his son's birth, and Sutherland, together with his two elder sisters, Margaret and Nellie, were therefore brought up by their mother. Perhaps because of this he was particularly close to his maternal grandfather, John Runcieman, and to his Uncle Frank, his mother's brother. His grandfather had a farm at Auchmill, some fifty miles north of Aberdeen, and Sutherland spent his summer holidays there throughout his childhood. The Runcieman family had been farmers and gardeners since at least the mid-eighteenth century, a fact that Sutherland recalled with pleasure and that must have helped to determine his own lifelong interest in gardening. His adoption of the name Runcieman (he was christened simply James) marks the importance of his mother's family in his upbringing. On his father's side, his grandfather had been a minister of the United Free Church of Scotland and there was some expectation in the family that Sutherland might follow the same calling. His father's sister, Aunt Allie, was remembered with affection. She regularly took her nephew and his sisters to performances at His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen and it was there that he first encountered Shakespeare in a production of *Macbeth* by F. R. Benson's company and *The Taming of the Shrew*, with Martin Harvey as Petruchio. Aunt Allie later moved to London where Sutherland visited her at the age of twenty, his first journey outside Scotland.

Just before his tenth birthday he was deeply affected by the death from appendicitis of his younger sister, Nellie, whom he remembered to

the end of his life as 'vivacious, pretty and intelligent'. From the age of seven he was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School. In the Upper School he was particularly influenced by the classics master, George Middleton, who had narrowly missed appointment to a chair at the University of Aberdeen, and under his guidance Sutherland won the Smith Gold Metal, awarded annually for translation from English to Latin. In English he was taught by William Murison, author of a substantial book on *English Composition*, whom he remembered for his 'insistent exposure of pomposity', for mining 'a deep vein in the Scottish character that leads to an instinctive tendency to plain speaking'. At his first attempt at the Higher School Certificate Examination he did well in Latin and Greek but failed in mathematics and, as he liked to recall with a wry bemusement, in English. He passed in both, however, in the following year.

In 1917 he entered the University of Aberdeen and in his first year took Latin, Greek, English and zoology. He had intended to read for an Honours degree in classics but he found the Latin course 'dull and disappointing'. He was surfeited by a diet of Tertullian's *Apologia* in the first term and the Greek course was insufficiently challenging compared with what he had already achieved at school. He was, however, encouraged to specialise in English by the lectures of Professor A. A. Jack whom he greatly admired and whose influence he often warmly acknowledged in later life. His sister Margaret, who had graduated in English, was by this time Professor Jack's research assistant. Jack, who had given the Clark Lectures at Cambridge in 1914, succeeded H. J. C. Grierson in the Aberdeen Chair in 1915. He ranged in his own published work from Chaucer and Shakespeare to Thackeray and the Brontës and he commanded the respect and admiration of his students. Eric Linklater, a contemporary of Sutherland both at school and university and a close friend, described Jack as possessing 'a heart in love with . . . Shakespeare's panegyric tongue . . . and a learned delight in his compact imagination', together with 'the innocence, the capacity for pure amazement, that is the key to Wordsworth'.<sup>1</sup> Sutherland commented that Jack 'was remarkably sensitive to linguistic impressions of all kinds . . . and he made us feel that we were all his intellectual equals, and that we could be trusted to respond to the verbal nuances and nicer distinctions he habitually offered for our consideration'. These qualities

<sup>1</sup> Eric Linklater, *The Man on My Back: An Autobiography* (London, 1941), p. 76.

clearly had a major influence on the direction of Sutherland's academic development.

He graduated with a first class degree in 1921, having made no definite decision about a career. The early family ambition that he should enter the ministry had been quietly abandoned and he now considered journalism. Much of his spare time at university had been taken up with student journalism, first as a contributor to the thriving college magazine *Alma Mater* and then as editor. *Alma Mater* appeared eleven times a year, contained news and acted as a record of university affairs but also had a substantial literary section. Sutherland contributed poetry, satirical verse drama, a mock-Pepysian diary on the tribulations of university life, and pseudonymous letters, sometimes on both sides of a question. All this, together with the practical experience of dealing with contributors, printers, and, on occasion, outraged readers, no doubt encouraged his later interest in the minutiae of Restoration and eighteenth-century journalism but it bore no immediate fruit. He was offered a few months' trial with the *Aberdeen Free Press*, but the terms were poor and he turned it down. He now somewhat reluctantly applied for admission to a teachers' training course, and gained some urgent practical experience by taking over a further education class in English literature, but almost immediately he experienced one of those turns of fortune that determine the pattern of a life. One of his lecturers at Aberdeen had taught for a time in Canada and had been asked at short notice if he could suggest someone to fill a vacant instructorship in English at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon at what must have seemed the princely salary of \$2,000 a year. Sutherland left almost immediately on a boat from Glasgow to Montreal, a ten-day passage, followed by a seventy-two hour train journey to Saskatoon.

At Saskatoon he taught freshman English, a junior set-text class beginning with Chaucer, and a senior course on English Romantic poets. Saskatoon was a new city. It had been founded in 1882 and became the site of the University of Saskatchewan as recently as 1906, but it was a vigorous community and Sutherland recollected his two years there with pleasure. On his return to Britain for the summer vacation in 1922 he made the first of many visits to the United States, taking in Minneapolis, Chicago, and New York.

In 1923 Sutherland entered Merton College, Oxford, to work under David Nichol Smith for the B.Litt. This move, encouraged by Professor Jack, and supported by the award of the Murray Scholarship from Aberdeen, was a decisive one, for Nichol Smith can be seen as a focal

point of many factors which were important to the development of Sutherland's critical practice and to his conception of English as a university discipline. Many of these influences centred, in fact, on Scottish universities. Nichol Smith was himself a Scot, born in Edinburgh in 1875, and he had read English at Edinburgh under David Masson, a former Professor of English at University College London, one of the great founders of English as a university subject which he perceived as necessitating both linguistic and literary study, together with an awareness of the need for history as a complementary discipline. In 1895, the year of Nichol Smith's graduation, Masson retired and was succeeded by George Saintsbury who employed Nichol Smith briefly as a research assistant. Later, he became an assistant to Walter Raleigh who had succeeded A. C. Bradley in the Glasgow English Chair in 1900, and when Raleigh was appointed to the first English Chair at Oxford in 1904, Nichol Smith, after a period as Professor of English at Newcastle, followed him to become Goldsmiths' Reader in 1908. His interests were predominantly, though not exclusively, in the eighteenth century, especially in relation to Augustan responses to Shakespeare, and he was a distinguished editor and annotator of eighteenth-century texts. The combination of scholarship and criticism that is suggested by this descent was one which Sutherland, always aware of a kind of apostolic succession in the teaching profession, was in turn to make his own. His own warm and sympathetic assessment of Nichol Smith was expressed in the obituary he wrote for *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1962.

His first intention had been to work on the Shakespearian editor Edward Capell, but he was guided by his supervisor towards Nicholas Rowe and began research which took him to the core of eighteenth-century literary London since Rowe, editor, translator, poet, and dramatist, was a friend of Congreve, Addison, Steele, Swift, and Pope. He began seeking information about Rowe in the files of Queen Anne newspapers, thus initiating what was to prove a lifelong research interest in Restoration and eighteenth-century journalism. Lecture courses he attended included Nichol Smith on 'Early Eighteenth-Century Literature' and Percy Simpson on 'Textual Criticism'.

Sutherland gained the Chancellor's English Essay Prize in 1925 for an essay on 'Form in Literature' and he continued to write verse, publishing in *Outlook*, *Cherwell*, and *Isis*. In 1926 some of this work, together with poems from *Alma Mater*, was collected and published by Blackwell in a volume entitled *Leucocholy*. Many of the poems are

melancholy or ironic reflections on the limitations of life as a student but, while they express common enough frustrations and anxieties of youth, they also point to a real concern to probe the relationship between literature and life, a concern that may have derived from A. A. Jack who, Linklater says, always insisted that a proper reading of literature ‘required some small apprenticeship in living’.<sup>2</sup> It may also reflect the fact that many of his close friends were ex-servicemen (Sutherland had been medically graded C3 in 1918 and was not called up), and an awareness of events in an unsettled post-war Europe. On a visit to Italy in 1924, for example, he witnessed a blackshirt demonstration in Rome. He always recognised, as he said later, ‘that there are more important things in life than even great literature, and . . . the critic who is not aware of this is not to be trusted’.<sup>3</sup>

In the summer of 1925 Sutherland accepted a one-term vacancy in University College Southampton and in the autumn he was appointed to a lectureship in the University of Glasgow where he stayed for five years. The Regius Professor was William Macneile Dixon, who had followed Raleigh in the chair, and amongst colleagues were Peter Alexander, who himself became Regius Professor in 1935, and Bernard Wright, who later held the chair at Southampton. The department was large, with 700 ordinary students, divided into three groups for lectures. Sutherland, apart from tutorials and classes with honours students, was assigned a course on European thought and culture from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and, as he later said, with a characteristic touch of amused self-deprecation: ‘Most of what I imparted to my students must have been new to . . . them, for it was certainly new to me.’ In Glasgow he completed his thesis on Rowe which was accepted for the B.Litt. in 1927. An offshoot of this work was the handsome edition of *Three Plays* by Nicholas Rowe published by Eric Partridge’s Scholartis Press in 1929, and an article, ‘Shakespeare’s Imitators in the Eighteenth Century’, in *Modern Language Review* (1933). He also broadened his range beyond the eighteenth century with an edition of Dekker’s *Shoemaker’s Holiday* (1931). Moreover, in 1930, he published *Jasper Weeple*, a Utopian fable (he later called it ‘a poor man’s *Gulliver’s Travels*’) in which Jasper visits the idyllic society of Midanglia, finding there a satiric contrast to contemporary England. The usual targets—education, the law, marriage— are attacked with some verve, but overall the story

<sup>2</sup> See above, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> James R. Sutherland, *The English Critic* (London, 1952), p. 14.

lacks narrative drive and the writing is too literary and even toned. Sutherland later recognised its weaknesses but for some years he nurtured the ambition to succeed in fiction, completing two further, though unpublished, novels.

At this time Sutherland was something of a sportsman. He enjoyed tennis which he had first played on a court on his grandfather's farm and he had played rugby football at stand-off half for his school and university in Aberdeen. At Oxford he had taken up hockey, and now in Glasgow he played regularly for the university team. He was also a keen walker and modest golfer.

He left Glasgow in 1930 when he was appointed by C. J. Sisson to a Senior Lectureship at University College London and he was to remain within the University of London for the rest of his career, becoming Professor of English at Birkbeck College from 1936–44; Professor of English Language and Literature at Queen Mary College from 1944–51; and Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature, University College London, from 1951–67.

In 1931 he married Helen Dircks, daughter of Will H. Dircks, an editor and critic. She was herself the author of two volumes of imagist verse, *Finding* (1918) and *Passenger* (1920) and later developed an independent and successful career as an advertising copy-writer. The young couple are remembered from the early days of their marriage as elegant ballroom dancers. Dancing had long been one of Sutherland's accomplishments and he once wrote that 'the slow fox-trot . . . is enshrined on my memory as one of the notable cultural achievements of the 1920's'. The marriage was to be a long and happy one. They lived at first in London, but soon moved to Long Wittenham, south of Oxford, to a house with a garden sloping to the River Windrush. They stayed there for twenty years, moving then to nearby Sutton Courtenay, to a house with a substantially larger garden. In Oxfordshire, Sutherland was able to pursue a love of gardening which continued into his eighties, and in the Windrush he could indulge an enthusiasm for fishing which had begun when he was a boy and which took him to holidays not only in Scotland but in Ireland and Norway.

In publishing his first critical book *The Medium of Poetry* (1933) in the 'Hogarth Lectures in Literature' series, issued by Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Sutherland joined a distinguished list. Previous contributors to the series had included H. J. C. Grierson, Edwin Muir, Allardyce Nicoll, and G. D. H. Cole. Here he develops ideas which had taken earlier shape in his submission for the Chancellor's English

Essay Prize and he acknowledges the influence of A. A. Jack 'who started several of the hares that I have chased in the following pages'. He examines 'how far the medium of poetry influences the mind of the poet', distinguishing broadly between poets who 'translate' experience into verse, and for whom fidelity to the experience itself is paramount, with others who are responsive to suggestions arising from the metre, rhyme scheme and form of the medium itself. The most penetrating parts of the discussion are attempts to catch the poet in mid-thought by the analysis of early drafts, a method particularly effective in the chapter on 'Rhyme'.

*The Medium of Poetry* was a gathering together of threads from earlier work. In London, Sutherland now had for the first time the opportunity to use the resources of the British Museum, the Public Record Office, and the Victoria and Albert Museum to pursue the kind of archival research that he found increasingly absorbing. He at first began to prepare an edition of the plays of Susannah Centlivre, a friend of Nicholas Rowe, for the Scholartis Press but this had to be abandoned when the press ran into financial difficulties. Some of the research was, however, published in a later article, 'The Progress of Error: Mrs Centlivre and the Biographers' (*Review of English Studies* (1942)). This shows Sutherland at his best, using minute knowledge of the period to support urbane but extremely sharp reflections on the inventions and inaccuracies which accumulate in biographical tradition. Work at the Public Record Office on lawsuits on the equity side of Chancery eventually marked out two major lines of research: on Defoe and Pope. His first article on Defoe, 'Some Early Troubles of Daniel Defoe' (*Review of English Studies* (1933)) showed a characteristic eye for detail and pertinacity in pursuing a complex trail of evidence. It threw light on Defoe's early commercial activities by examining nine different lawsuits in which Defoe was accused of malpractice or failure to honour agreements and obligations. 'A Note on the Last Years of Defoe' (*Modern Language Notes* (1934)) adduced further material from Chancery records to show how Defoe was pursued by litigation to the very end of his life. For some scholars minutiae of this kind would have had an essentially antiquarian interest but Sutherland saw beyond the events themselves to the picture of a man more than usually engaged with the life of his time. Defoe appealed to him precisely because he was not simply a literary figure but a man who, when he published *Robinson Crusoe* at the age of fifty-nine, 'invented' the novel almost as a sideline to a life of multifarious activity. It is his indomitability, his

'refusal to take a knock-out', his ability to ride the fluctuations of political life, which appeals.

The major biography *Defoe* (1937), a beautifully lucid account of the complexities of Defoe's life, was a seminal work that fostered much critical interest in Defoe although, as Sutherland remarked a little sadly in the second edition of his work (1950), the interest was much stronger in America than in Britain, an ironic state of affairs given that Sutherland shows himself constantly aware of the Englishness of Defoe's make-up which he saw with the objectivity of a Scot. Sutherland helped to redress this imbalance in his later *Defoe: A Critical Study* (1971), a rounded view of Defoe's wide-ranging achievement which remains the best single account of Defoe as journalist, pamphleteer, and poet, as well as writer of fiction. Sutherland had an unrivalled skill in demonstrating how Defoe negotiated the 'twilight world between fact and fiction'. His analysis of Defoe's 'confident audacity' in the use of his sources for *Memoirs of a Cavalier* or *History of the Pyrates* remains exciting, as do his comments on the little regarded 'sentimental' aspects of *Col. Jack*.

A second major line of research developed in parallel with the work on Defoe. In 1932 John Butt, another pupil of Nichol Smith, became (at the age of twenty-eight) general editor of the projected Twickenham Edition of Pope's poetry. He assembled a strong team which included several scholars at that time still in their early thirties whose subsequent work would transform our view of the eighteenth century: Geoffrey Tillotson, Maynard Mack, and F. W. Bateson, and also James Sutherland who undertook *The Dunciad*. The problems to be faced in producing a satisfactory edition of *The Dunciad* were formidable. The poem exists in two substantially different versions, involving a change of hero and expansion from three to four books; in both versions it contains an elaborate satirical commentary that threatens to submerge the text; it was subjected to devious stratagems of obfuscation and concealment at its first appearance and continuously amended through some thirty editions published in Pope's lifetime. Moreover, it is full of obscure topical allusions that demand careful annotation. To present such a complex of textual and explanatory material in a manageable form was itself a challenge. Sutherland's solution enabled the material to appear in a single volume and his arrangement has proved its practicality over time. He gives the two main versions of the poem itself complete in the 1729 and 1743 Quarto texts but reduces the otherwise unmanageable weight of the apparatus by cross-referencing in cases where the 1729

commentary was unchanged in later editions. His collations and explanatory notes achieve an impressive level of clarity and detail and are supported by a Biographical Appendix, an extremely useful guide to Grub Street. Comparison with the earlier standard edition by Elwin and Courthope demonstrates an astonishing advance. In a review, Louis Bredvold rightly praised the editor's 'dexterity and lucidity . . . in presenting so intricate a subject'.<sup>4</sup> It has become an essential tool for eighteenth-century scholars and seems unlikely to be superseded.

An offshoot of Sutherland's major work on Defoe and Pope was the interesting and perhaps undervalued book *Background for Queen Anne* (1939). 'What separates us from the past more than anything else', Sutherland says, 'is that we always see it as we see a landscape from the top of a hill', absorbing the main features but missing the detail. What we need to see to form an accurate impression of the past 'is more triviality and less importance'. *Background for Queen Anne* gives a close-up of some figures who were newsworthy, even notorious, in their day and who still attract by their 'persistent vitality', even though they have now merged into the background. Their names were once on everyone's lips and they appeal to what Sutherland unapologetically calls 'a crude and probably inartistic concern for things that actually happened'. Amongst the group was Richard Burridge, a notorious blasphemer who became a household word, a bugbear to frighten children, and John Lacy, a miracle worker and prophet who caused an immense sensation by making a claim that he would resurrect a certain Dr Thomas Emes from the dead. The material for these brief lives derives largely from newspapers and pamphlets and each chapter is introduced by a miscellaneous collage of news items which gives a lively sense of the quotidian scene.

A different sort of literary context was the subject of Sutherland's first post-war book, *A Preface to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (1948). In his Warton Lecture on 'Wordsworth and Pope', delivered at the British Academy in 1944, he had argued that Wordsworth's literary criticism, with its 'evangelical, even . . . messianic note' had 'done a good deal of harm to literary criticism by calling upon us to make a choice where no choice was necessary', to respond to Wordsworth's 'egotistical sublime' at the expense of other kinds of poetry. *A Preface to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* attempts to clear away the prejudices created by Wordsworthian tradition, extended and reinforced as it had been by

<sup>4</sup> For Bredvold's review of *The Dunciad*, see *Modern Language Notes*, 60 (1945), 501–2.

Matthew Arnold, and to invite readers to approach Augustan poetry on its own terms. At his back Sutherland was aware, too, of the immense popularity of the Metaphysicals. Reread today, *A Preface* can at times seem a little over-apologetic, but this is a sign of how well it did its work and how much the strengths of Augustan literature are now taken for granted. When I was an undergraduate in the late 1940s and early 1950s the period was still deeply unfashionable amongst students and the newly published *A Preface* presented an unexpected challenge. By using his breadth of reading in critical and periodical literature to establish the assumptions and attitudes of the age, however, Sutherland helped to recreate a taste that has led in the last forty years to a major re-evaluation of the period.

The tone of *A Preface*, however, already seemed remarkably civilised. The general tendency of literary criticism in the twentieth century had been to become both more systematic and more dogmatic, with a consequent narrowing of focus that Sutherland deplored. In an inaugural lecture, *The English Critic*, delivered at University College London in 1952, he firmly stated his own position at a time when he saw a present danger that criticism was no longer content to be, in Pope's phrase, 'the Muse's handmaid' but aspired to become an independent activity. He found the English critical tradition exemplified in qualities characteristic of the work of four critics. The 'urbanity', 'sedate cheerfulness and lively discursiveness' of Dryden's unpedantic essays. The independence and openness of Johnson's writing, with its interest in literary biography and conviction that literature is important in proportion as it deals with life. The personal immediacy and capacity to communicate enjoyment that springs from Hazlitt's determination to 'feel what is good and give reasons for the faith that is in me'. Finally, perhaps to the audience most surprisingly, the 'controlled impressionism' of Saintsbury, his development of a connoisseurship in books analogous to the evolution of a mature taste in wine. Coleridge was excluded because his undoubted greatness was too individual to form part of a tradition and Arnold because he 'cared too much' and tried to give literature a greater significance than it could properly sustain.

All this was boldly challenging at a time when much excitement was being generated by the moral earnestness of F. R. Leavis, the intensive analyses of Cleanth Brooks's *The Well-Wrought Urn* (1947), and the systematic theorising of Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* (1949). The argument of *The English Critic* was recapitulated and endorsed in a leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, which

acted as a red rag to the critical bulls, and it laid Sutherland open to charges of diletantism. He knew that he was being unfashionable but he did not waver in his belief that criticism should be a humane and social activity, addressed to and meeting the needs not only of academics but of men and women who lived in the world, and he was able to put his case because his own research record was unassailable. He was greatly in demand as a supervisor, especially by students from the United States where he was well known. A *Preface* was based in part on a course given at Harvard in 1947 during the first of many post-war visits to American universities. Between 1947 and 1970 he held visiting professorships at Harvard, Indiana, UCLA, Pittsburgh, and New York and he was Clark Library Fellow, also at UCLA.

His years as Northcliffe Professor were happy ones. The School of English within the University of London was strong and flourishing and he was at home among such colleagues at other colleges as Geoffrey Tillotson (Birkbeck), Geoffrey Bullough (King's), Una Ellis Fermor and later Kathleen Tillotson (Bedford), Harold Jenkins (Westfield), and Gladys Willcock and later George Kane (Royal Holloway). The tradition of University College itself as a secular and unexclusive institution devoted to the broadening of higher education was congenial to his temperament and to his own Scottish inheritance. The terms of the Northcliffe Chair gave him powers as Head of Department, but Hugh Smith, his colleague as Quain Professor, was a very willing participator in the burdens of administration. He also felt a close rapport with a number of younger colleagues who shared his own research interests, notably Basil Greenslade and Charles Peake whose help is acknowledged in various volumes.

In public he could appear a reserved man, with a somewhat formal, unfailingly courteous manner, given emphasis by the precise intonations of his Aberdeen upbringing. All who knew him well, however, remember him as a man of deep and generous feeling. He enjoyed conversation and was a memorable raconteur, and he had a wide circle of friends whom he and Helen entertained both at Sutton Courtenay and in their London clubs.

One particular enterprise in which he took pleasure had the aim of fostering academic co-operation in a social setting. Nowadays it is widely understood by literary critics that each generation 'constructs' its own sense of the past in response to changing cultural and social pressures, and the recognition of this truth was anticipated when in 1954 Sutherland joined with a group of colleagues in establishing the

Crabtree Foundation to honour the work of Joseph Crabtree, a sadly neglected poet whose life of exactly one hundred years (1754–1854) spanned the transition from the Classical to the post-Romantic period. Sutherland's first annual Oration, *Homage to Crabtree*, surveyed the scanty existing scholarship and laid down many important guidelines for the future. The success of this scholarly venture, in which the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* have always exerted an important influence, and which has remained closely associated with University College London, will be marked in 1997 by the publication of *The Crabtree Orations, 1954–1994*.

In the later part of his career Sutherland received many honours. He became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1953 and was awarded honorary doctorates at the universities of Aberdeen (1955), Edinburgh (1968), and Liège (1974). He was invited to give several important lecture series, including the Walter Scott Lectures at the University of Edinburgh (1952), the Alexander Lectures in Toronto (*On English Prose*, published 1957), the Clark Lectures in Cambridge (*English Satire*, published 1958), and the W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture in Glasgow (1962). The Clark Lectures in particular will continue to give a good impression of his qualities as a lecturer to those who never heard him. On the podium he was an impressive figure, spare and elegant and incisive in manner. He was always—whether addressing first-year undergraduates or a distinguished general audience—meticulously prepared, informative, lucid, mindful of the occasion, and possessing, as he said of Hazlitt, 'the secret of communicating his enjoyment' and stimulating his listeners. He used anecdote and imagery to excellent effect: it was characteristic of Swift, he said, in *English Satire* 'to proceed by a sort of jujitsu method, by which the victim of satire was thrown by his own weight'. He discriminated ('*Jonathan Wild* is a brilliant and sustained performance . . . but no one ever wished it longer'). He had a connoisseur's sensitivity to the writer's tone of voice, especially with Dryden and Pope, and he analysed linguistic effects with a subtle precision that gives far more solidity to his observations than the ease of manner might at first suggest. It could be argued that he sometimes tried to cover too much ground—both *On English Prose* and *English Satire* survey so broad a chronological span that they are inevitably uneven—but the reader finds, even now, an impressive combination of perspective and close-up views.

His distinction as a speaker led to appointment as Public Orator of the University of London from 1957–62. The main function, at the

annual Foundation Day ceremony, was to present honorary graduands for the award of a degree *honoris causa*, a rhetorical exercise in which the desire to 'enliven morality with wit' places the speaker on something of a tightrope in an atmosphere of formal academic ceremonial. Amongst the many graduands he presented were Princess Margaret, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, Sir Kenneth Clark and, closest to the Orator's own interests, Professor John Dover Wilson.

Following his retirement in 1967 he continued to be extremely active, first completing his contribution to *The Oxford History of English Literature*, a series planned before the war, with F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée as general editors. The first volume to be completed, Douglas Bush's *The Early Seventeenth Century*, appeared in 1945 and the last some forty-four years later. Inevitably, it was difficult to maintain an overall sense of direction and common purpose to the series and to a large extent each volume had to establish its own terms of reference. Sutherland had undertaken the volume *English Literature in the Later Seventeenth Century* with Hugh Macdonald, but following Macdonald's death in 1958 he became solely responsible for the work which appeared in 1969. What above all gives unity to his discussion of the period is his interest in the new Restoration relationship between authors and readers arising from the development of a well-organised, London-based, literary community. The socialising of literary experience is seen as the central fact of Restoration theatre, but it is important also in essays (Dryden's 'lively discursiveness'), philosophy (Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* grew out of discussion between 'five or six friends meeting at my Chamber') and historical writing. Another distinguishing mark of Sutherland's volume is the degree of attention given to many minor writers 'who are being neglected' although 'their writing still has life and individuality'. Quite often one can see that these figures mirror Sutherland's own attitudes, especially in the case of Gilbert Burnet, a Scot with strong antiquarian interests, an aptitude for scholarly research, and a fondness for gossip and anecdote. Amongst the major figures Dryden and Bunyan are central, and the long section on Bunyan is particularly sympathetic and acute. When the volume was published there were inevitably some who decried the nature of the *Oxford History* itself as gossipy and anecdotal, lacking the rigour of modern methodologies, but Sutherland's volume was well received for its 'humanity, judgment and humour'.

Next came Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel*

*Hutchinson* (1973), edited from a recently rediscovered manuscript and replacing an edition by C. H. Firth (1885).

The final book, *The Restoration Newspaper and its Development*, is a fitting conclusion to Sutherland's long-standing interest in journalism and it is written with characteristic verve, an undimmed eye for the texture of social life, and a continuing pleasure in 'things that actually happened'. It is a descriptive rather than an analytical account of its subject, but it is an absorbing study. The overall emphasis is biographical. Sutherland never forgets that the newspapers he discusses—often, though not always, extremely fugitive titles—were produced by men and women who were throughout the period subject to legal and political pressure, whose sources of information were uncertain and variable (foreign news might dry up completely if storms hindered shipping), and who entirely lacked the machinery of modern news-gathering. One of the finest chapters, 'The newspaper men and women', brings together much important information about people who combined proprietorial, editorial, and journalistic functions and, as in the studies of Defoe, Sutherland communicates his admiration for the indomitability and practical expertise of these little known figures. This section of the book will, like the Biographical Appendix to the Twickenham *Dunciad*, continue to be an important reference tool, while other chapters give a vivid account of the content of Restoration newspapers and show the speed with which journalism developed an emphasis on lurid crime, executions, and topical trivia.

Helen died in 1975, and in 1977 Sutherland married Eve Betts, widow of Ernest Betts, the critic and historian of film, a marriage which brought renewed happiness to his final years. He became close to Eve's children and grandchildren, and he was able to enjoy a kind of family life that he had not previously experienced. In 1988 they moved from Sutton Courtenay to Murray Court in Oxford, called, to Sutherland's pleasure, after Sir James Murray, the first editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The accolade of the knighthood conferred in 1992 was a culminating and greatly appreciated honour. He remained alert and active to the end of his life (a final article, on Swift, appeared in 1993), though sadly affected by a stroke in 1992. He died on 24 February 1996.

In a Viewpoint article in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1974 Sutherland reflects on his own career and on some of the accidents that shaped it, and concludes that an essential fact for him was the strong and untutored pleasure in literature that developed when he was young

and that provided the motor for his activities. Without this primary enthusiasm and the opportunity to read with ‘avidity and uncritical delight’, criticism will be barren. ‘Unless’, he writes, ‘a young man has gone through a period of running wild in literature, as the young Keats ran wild in *The Faerie Queene* . . . I doubt if he will ever become the sort of literary critic to whom I would want to pay much attention’. Rather similarly, in his Queen Mary College inaugural, *English in the Universities* (1945), he said that what he looked for in selecting students was an instinctive response ‘to words and rhythm, to the cadence of English speech, English prose, English verse, to the sound-value of the words themselves and in combination, and the complete fusion of words and meaning’. Sutherland himself retained this kind of responsiveness throughout his life (he could always quote prodigiously from memory) and the pure enjoyment of literature is evident in everything he wrote, as is his belief that literature is not at bottom arcane or the preserve of scholars but a freely available good.

It is appropriate that he should be known to a very wide range of readers through his editorship of *The Oxford Book of English Talk* (1953) and *The Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes* (1975), both highly successful volumes. Neither could have been compiled without a lifetime of eclectic reading and a refusal to set rigid bounds between canonical and non-canonical writing. *English Talk* draws heavily on law reports, a ‘rich source of idiomatic material’ which brings us as close as we can now get to the ‘spontaneous feelings and sentiments of whores and vagabonds, thieves and pickpockets’; *Literary Anecdotes* includes some stories only loosely connected to literature but which, Sutherland says, ‘I believe most readers would wish to see included and which, in any case, I could not bring myself to omit’. There is a generosity and inclusiveness here that is entirely typical. His greatest achievements are to be found, I believe, in *The Dunciad* and the life of *Defoe* but both the edition and the biography depend on an approach to literature that was consistent from first to last in his work, and that links him to the tradition that he defined so well in *The English Critic*.

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not only provided much information drawn from personal knowledge but also made available the typescript of extensive, though incomplete, memoirs written by Sir James in his eighties. The memoirs have been my most important source of information concerning his upbringing, education, and early teaching experience but they do not extend beyond the 1930s. I have also benefited from discussions with Lord Quirk, Professor George Kane, and Professor Harold Jenkins, and from correspondence with Professor Norman Jeffares. Mr Bryant Bennet kindly made available a copy of *Homage to Crabtree*. I have been guided also by personal knowledge gained during my years as a student at Queen Mary College from 1949–54 and as a member of staff in the English Department of University College from 1958–74.