

IN MEMORIAM

William Nelson

A FOUNDING MEMBER of the Renaissance Society of America, William Nelson, William Peterfield Trent Emeritus Professor at Columbia University, died on October 26, 1978. Following on this early support of the Society, he contributed in numerous ways throughout the remainder of his career to its development, first, as Executive Director from 1962 to 1969 (including overseeing RQ one year while its Editor was on leave), as Chairman for International Cooperation (1970–72), and then as President in 1976, and, finally, as a Trustee of Invested Funds (1972–76; 1977–78), the position which he currently held. As a result of these official roles, as well as his own lively interest in the Renaissance, his was a manifold and constant involvement in the Society's many-faceted activities.

His own special interest was the English sixteenth century, beginning with that rude railing rhymist acclaimed by three universities: John Skelton, Laureate. This, the title of his first book, consisted of a group of essays relating to that puzzling dimorphic figure and his role in the early Tudor court; published in 1939 and reprinted in 1964, it was and continues to be a seminal study. Two additional publications stemmed from his interest in the early Renaissance—editions of *The Life of St. George* by Alexander Barclay (1955), a reputedly lost work he recovered from the recesses of Trinity College, Cambridge, and *A Fifteenth-Century Schoolbook* (1956). As his numerous articles attest, he maintained an interest in the early humanists, particularly Erasmus and More, but his very personal interest centered on Spenser. The result, simply entitled *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser*, appeared in 1963, a distillation of much scholarly reading and critical reflection. Among the wilder meanderings of Spenserian studies, it remains a sane and sensitive response to a poet in his time, set forth with characteristic lucidity. This study followed on a collection of essays he had edited for the English Institute entitled *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (1961). His last book to appear presents the dilemma of the Renaissance storyteller (*Fact or Fiction*, 1973), tracing back to classical sources the opposition between truth-to-fact or -fiction and highlighting the critical reaction to the feigning writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Each of these studies reveals a fine response to diverse literary texts, whether classical, medieval, or Renaissance. Never losing sight of the historical context, invariably William Nelson responded to the human impulse behind them, an approach he carried over into all of his activities, marking him out as a truly humane spirit. Inevitably, his death is a hard loss for all; it is especially so for a generation of students who worked with him closely on many different aspects of literary study. For them Spenser's elegiac line is particularly apt: 'The branch once dead, the budde eke needes must quail.'

Elizabeth Story Donno

Myron P. Gilmore

MYRON PIPER GILMORE was a founder member of the Renaissance Society and representative for history from 1959 to 1966; he joined the Executive Board in 1973. At the Society's annual meeting in 1978, the Council elected him Vice President (and President-elect) in recognition of his service to Renaissance scholarship. He died in Cambridge on October 27, 1978, five months before he would have begun his term as the Society's President.

The pattern of Myron Gilmore's intellectual interests was already visible in his doctoral dissertation (*The Argument from Roman Law in Political Theory, 1200–1600*, published in 1941) and in the first graduate seminars he gave when he returned to Harvard after serving in the Navy during the war: Renaissance political theory and practice (1947) and Erasmus (1948). For Erasmus he felt a special affection, and he studied him and wrote about him at regular intervals over thirty years. In 1963 he published *Humanists and Jurists*, six studies about the appearance during the Italian Renaissance of new ideas on the nature and uses of history. His Harvard lectures were among the most stimulating and popular to be heard there in the 1950's and 60's. His influential book of synthesis, *The World of Humanism* (1952), preserves much of their style and content.

Many teachers are learned, accessible, and generous to the young. Myron's special gift was to capture the imagination of his pupils, fire