

*Norman Hugh MacKenzie*  
*1915-2004*

Norman MacKenzie completed his University of London doctorate (1940) in the field of Seventeenth Century prose. War service took him to Hong Kong and, after the fall of the colony, he was sent to Japan as a prisoner of war, a gruesome experience that had a profound effect on him. Making a fresh start in the University of Melbourne (1946-48), he turned to the complexities of Gerard Manley Hopkins, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot., then followed six years at the University of Natal as both Senior Lecturer in charge of English in Durban and Dean of the Men's Residence. When a new multiracial university college was founded in Rhodesia, the land of his birth, his was one of the first appointments to its academic staff and administration, as Professor and Head of the Department of English (1955-65) and also as Dean of the Faculty of Arts for the second half of that period. In 1965 he emigrated to Canada, briefly to Laurentian University (1965-66), and then to Queen's University where he spent the rest of his career.

In Canada his energies have been concentrated on graduate work and the development of Anglo-Irish studies, though his publications have been mainly on the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. The theft of his early "bio-critical" research on Hopkins diverted him into textual studies—as co-editor with W.H. Gardner of the *Poems*, 4th edn. (1967, 9th imp. 1988) he corrected many corrupt readings. The stolen MS was partially reconstructed to appear as *Hopkins* (1968), then as a 'talking-book' for the blind, and finally in a Japanese translation (1986). He edited *Poems by Hopkins* for the Folio Society (1974), contributed chapters on Hopkins to eight books, and wrote more than twenty Hopkins articles for various journals. In 1981 he published *A Reader's Guide to Hopkins*. He completed a three-volume presentation of Hopkins's verse for scholarly use: *The Poetical Works* (Oxford English Texts, 1990, reprinted 1992) along with two folio volumes reproducing all the MS drafts and fair copies in facsimile with extensive annotations (536 plates, Garland Publishing, N.Y.: 1989 and 1991). For the Hopkins Centenary (1988-89) he delivered seven lectures in Oxford University as Martin D'Arcy lecturer, and six others in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Rhode Island, Boston and Queen's University. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1979.

As a scholar, Norman was meticulous, careful, and caring and at the same time had wonderfully broad interests. He would be found sitting for hours in the library making sure that everything knowable was tracked down and that everything known was properly referenced. A perfect illustration of this is found in his 1999 response to the request from the Saturday Club for "news of current activities":

*As I deepen my exploration of Hopkins's Victorian environment through the Stauffer, the Douglas, the Art Library and the Bracken, I have an increasing sense of gratitude to all the Queen's staff and scholars, past and present, who have helped to build our remarkable*

*collections. Time and again I have found just the material I have needed in fields as varied as the significance of English place-names (misinterpreted until modern palaeobotany); tidal studies; ophthalmology (biographers make no allowance for the fact that oculists then had no slit-lamps to examine the cause of Hopkins's intense pain in the eyes, and so told him nothing was wrong with them); modern feminist critiques of drama contrasted with theatre-reviews of the mid-nineteenth century found in our formidable array of bound journals; and so on.*

*I have also helped the Canadian Association for Irish Studies in their survey of their first twenty-five years. As one of the few survivors from those formative days I sent them over 200 photocopies of minutes, programmes and correspondence to correct distorting memories.*

I have mentioned the Saturday Club and for good reason. Until his retirement from the Club in 1997, Norman MacKenzie was its secretary and moral leader and it was most certainly a significant part of his intellectual and cultural life. After each of the biweekly meetings, he produced legendary minutes, marked by clarity and intellectual rigour. The Kingston Club was established in 1897, a legitimate child of the Boston Saturday Club which dated from 1855. Those of us who joined the Club during his tenure were taken aside, carefully instructed, and given a due sense of the traditions we were entrusted with, right down to the sandwiches and compulsory gingerale to be served between 9:30 and 10. "We don't serve wine," he said. That was about maintaining balance, not of course the balance that is at risk with too much to drink, but the balance between the rituals of the past and the movement forward into the future. But move forward he did, through the historic admission of the first women members to the very threshold of the email era.

In 1993, as speaker at the annual dinner meeting, he talked on astronomy, his consuming hobby as a young student, and celebrated the accomplishment of his former graduate student David Levy: codiscoverer of the Shoemaker-Levy comet, a monumental ball of ice that had passed close to Jupiter the previous year. In 1981 Levy published an portion of his MA thesis in the Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada arguing that Hopkins must have gazed wonderingly at one of Wilhelm Tempel's comets as it slid gracefully past the sun in early August 1864, less than a month before he wrote his famous fragment, the poem that formed the conclusion of Norman's Saturday Club talk:

*I am like a slip of comet,  
Scarce worth discovery, in some corner seen  
Bridging the slender difference of two stars,  
Come out of space, or suddenly engender'd  
By heady elements, for no man knows;  
But when she sights the sun she grows and sizes  
And spins her skirts out, while her central star  
Shakes its cocooning mists; and so she comes  
To fields of light; millions of travelling rays  
Pierce her; she hangs upon the flame-cased sun,  
And sucks the light as full as Gideons's fleece:  
But then her tether calls her; she falls off,  
And as she dwindles shreds her smock of gold*

*TAYLOR: Norman Hugh MacKenzie*

*Between the sistering planets, till she comes  
To single Saturn, last and solitary;  
And then she goes out into the cavernous dark.  
So I go out: my little sweet is done:  
I have drawn heat from this contagious sun:  
To not ungentle death now forth I run.*

Norman MacKenzie: "I am like a slip of comet."

*Professor Peter D. Taylor  
Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
Queen's University*