IN MEMORIAM

OSCAR EDWARD MAURER, JR.

Oscar Edward Maurer, Jr., was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on January 29, 1911, the son of Oscar Edward Maurer and Marion Elizabeth Spooner. The elder Maurer, a Congregational minister who died in 1950, was for many years the pastor of New Haven's Center Church. Oscar Maurer, Jr., attended Hillhouse High School in New Haven from 1923 until his graduation in 1928, when he entered Yale College.

At Yale, Maurer held tuition scholarships for three years and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Graduating with a B.A. with honors in English in 1932, he promptly entered the Yale graduate school, where he held Porter, Foote, and Clark fellowships and received his Ph.D. in June, 1935. His professors included Tucker Brooke (Tudor drama, Shakespeare), Frederick Pottle (theories of poetry), Robert Menner (Old English), and Adoph Benson (Old Norse). Maurer's other languages (French, German, Latin, Greek) served him well not just in research but in reading for pleasure. At the University of Texas in the early 40s, for example, he met once a week with a small group of colleagues to read Herodotus. Maurer's main interest in graduate school, however, was not in languages but in the English literature of the nineteenth century, especially in Victorian poetry and prose, which he studied under W. C. DeVane and Karl Young. His dissertation, began under DeVane, completed under Richard Purdy, and approved by Brooke and Chauncey Tinker, was a study of the sources, composition, and critical reception of William Morris's The Earthly Paradise.

Freshly doctored, Maurer served as an instructor in English at Cornell from 1935 to 1940. On June 17, 1939, he married the talented pianist Jean Yarrow, whose letters to him from Vassar before their marriage he kept until shortly before he died, when he gave them to her lifelong college friend, Martha Wellington. A happy marriage, however, did not advance an academic career in days when senior professors were given to sage quotation
of the proverb, "A young man married is a young man marred." After the year 1940-41 as an instructor at the University of Buffalo, Maurer's appointment as an instructor at Yale in 1942 brought him a salary of just $250 per month. In September of the same year, appointment as an assistant professor at the University of Texas brought a nine-month salary of $2,600--a salary which remained unchanged for four years, though in the meantime Maurer had become a father. In 1948-49, the year before he was promoted to associate professor, his salary had risen to only $3,800.

Happily, Maurer cared more for teaching and learning than for status or display. Already as a graduate student he had developed the interest in Victorian periodicals which would guide his principal research for the rest of his life. "Serious students of Victorian literature," he wrote, "cannot afford to neglect these rich sources for the understanding of the age," for "the periodicals . . . not only reflected and recorded the ideas, opinions, and attitudes of their day but also helped to create them." In the words of a younger colleague, David DeLaura, Maurer was among the first to see the need for exploring the periodicals as an "immensely rich" but then still unexploited source of "knowledge about editors and publishers, about editorial policies, and above all about the identities of authors in a period of still largely anonymous journalism." For his devoted contributions to the development of a new academic industry, Maurer received a few lines of thanks in vols. I, II, and IV of the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, for which he became an advisory editor in 1959 and to which, at last, he gave all his relevant "research files."

For 32 years from 1942, Maurer worked in UT's Department of English. He was promoted to full professor in 1962, retired on June 1, 1974, began modified service the following autumn, and took emeritus status in September, 1975. His salary never reached $23,000.

Yet Maurer's service to the University and its English Department was admirable. For 25 years he was active in the production of the Department's journal, now Texas Studies in Literature and Language. From 1954 until 1968, he edited the Library Chronicle of the University of Texas. He carried his share of the bureaucratic burden, acting as chairman of the Department in the summers of 1950 and 1951 and serving quietly but efficiently
on many committees both of the Department and of the University. Named to the Graduate Faculty in 1955, he gave the Department's Graduate Lecture in March, 1963.

Maurer's unselfish scholarly work was not confined to the Texas campus. In the summer of 1953, as a visiting professor at the University of Chicago, he won the lasting gratitude and affection of his students there. In 1957, he was an invited speaker at the English Institute in New York. For many years, beginning in 1955, he was a member of the Bibliography Committee of the Modern Language Association's English Group X. From 1955 to 1968, he was a co-editor of the annual Victorian bibliography in *Modern Philology* (1955-57) and in *Victorian Studies* (from 1957). He was also a reader for a number of scholarly journals and university presses and an occasional reviewer.

It is, however, as a delightful colleague and a kindly but demanding teacher that Maurer will be longest and best remembered. He was so afraid of any form of display that he made restraint itself a spectacle, but old friends remember many evenings of good conversation and happy laughter in the Maurer home; and a generation of students and colleagues will not forget the priceless remarks which Maurer would toss off, in a barely audible growl, to the envy of the ambitious to be witty. He taught at every level, in long sessions and in summer schools, sometimes carrying three courses, sometimes even four. In the 60s and 70s, he was superb as the English Department's graduate advisor. Perceptive students eagerly chose him to supervise theses and dissertations. Over 50 graduate degrees were earned under his supervision.

Despite all these accomplishments as scholar and teacher, Maurer's last years did not bring him all the happiness that he had merited. His health was not robust, and he was deeply saddened by Jean Yarrow Maurer's death on June 26, 1985, after a long and agonizing illness. His own death came on September 9, 1990, at a nursing home in Bastrop, Texas. The typescript of his most ambitious work, an astonishingly detailed account of the early Victorian history of the satirical journal *Punch*, remains unpublished in the possession of his younger daughter, Elizabeth Thrift. Maurer is also survived by his older daughter, Joanna Alves, and several grandchildren.
This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James Sledd (Chair), John P. Farrell, and Betty Sue Flowers.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Swinburne vs. Furnivall: A Case Study in 'Aesthetic' vs. 'Scientific' Criticism." University of Texas Studies in English 31 (1952): 86-96.


Victorian Manuscripts at the University of Texas Library." Victorian Newsletter 6 (Nov. 1954): 3.


"Victorian Periodicals at TxU." Library Chronicle 5.3 (Spring 1955): 18-23.


Rev. of *A First-Draft Version of Finnegans Wake*, by David Hayman. *Austin American Statesman* 13 March 1963: G24. [It has not been possible to verify this reference, which was taken from Professor Maurer's personnel file.]


Rev. of *Riata: The Student Literary Magazine of the University of Texas*, *Daily Texan* 12 May 1965: 1.


