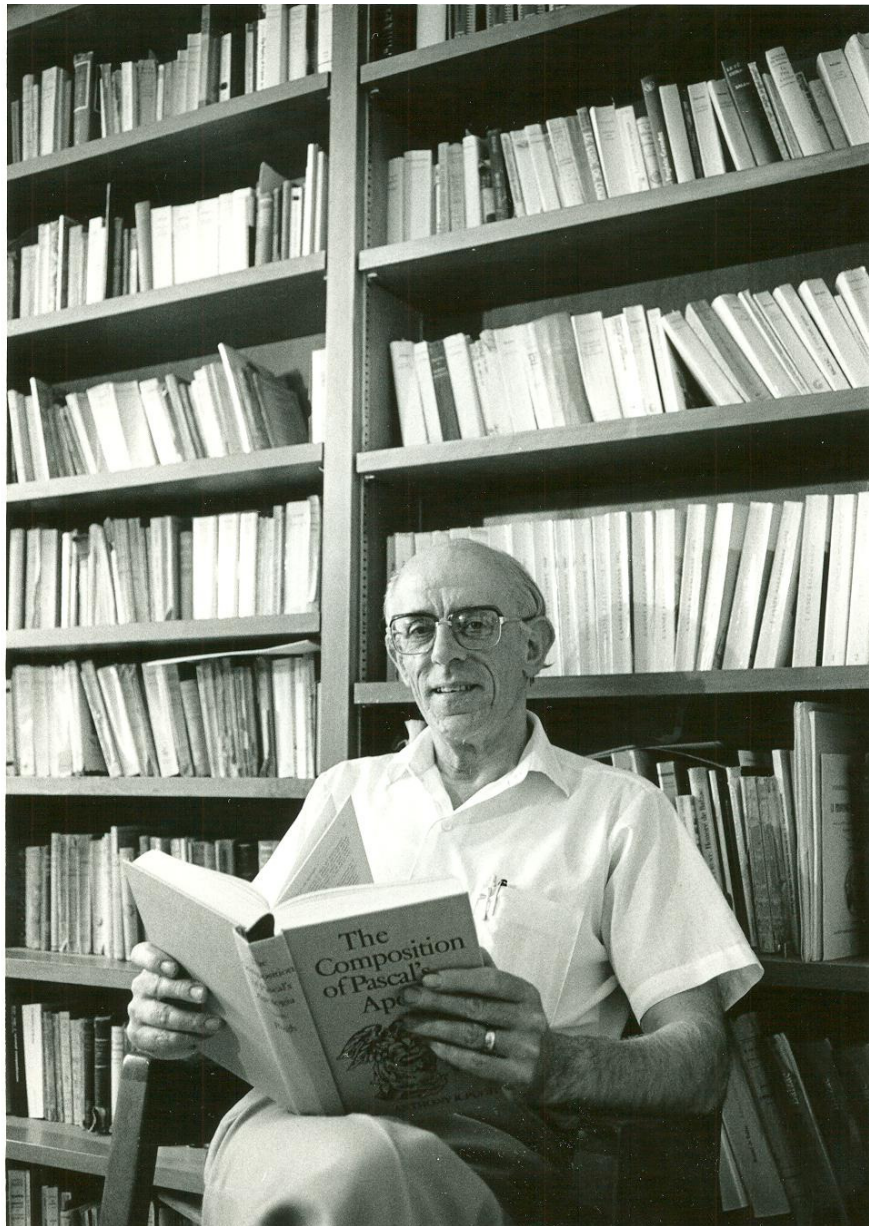


GRAHAM FALCONER

Anthony R. Pugh
1931-2004



Anthony Roy Pugh was born in Liverpool, England on August 16, 1931. He was educated at Liverpool Institute and Pembroke College, Cambridge (BA 1953, MA 1956, PhD 1959). After a brief spell as an Assistant Lecturer at King's College London, he was a Lecturer in French at Queen's College, Belfast from 1959 to 1969. It was while in Northern Ireland that most of the research for his first major book was carried out. In 1969, after a term as Visiting Professor the previous year, he was appointed to a full professorship at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, where he would spend the rest of his career. He died in Fredericton on February 6, 2004 after a nine-year battle with leukemia. He is survived by his wife Mary and three children.

In the period corresponding to the main part of Anthony Pugh's career, from, say, 1970 to 2000, literary studies and, more especially, French literary studies were being stimulated by ideas drawn from parallel disciplines such as semiotics, psychoanalysis, marxism and feminism. While recognizing the value of this cross-fertilization - he was, for example, unstinting in his praise of Pierre Barbéris' monumental marxist thesis, *Balzac et le Mal du siècle* - Anthony Pugh chose to pursue what many of his contemporaries would have regarded as distinctly old-fashioned scholarly interests, focusing on the primacy of literary form and on manuscript evidence of the evolution of that form. His research, which resulted in three major books (on Balzac, Pascal and Proust), all of which would become standard reference works in their respective fields, was driven by two deep-rooted convictions from which he would never waver.

For Pugh, it was the formal properties of a work of art, its shape, how one part related to another and the sum of those parts to the whole, that constituted the source of aesthetic pleasure, whether in a simple work such as a Maupassant short story or a Haydn sonata, or more complex structures requiring years of study by the reader or listener, as in Proust or Wagner. (The parallel with music is particularly apposite here, as Professor Pugh, although by own admission a listener rather than a performer, was a formidably learned *mélomane*, contributing over a thousand program notes, talks and radio broadcasts about concerts in Atlantic Canada; he also served on the board of Début Atlantic). This credo - *tout se tient*, everything is connected, one of Balzac's favorite expressions - is presented up front and centre, with typical Northern bluntness, in the opening pages of his second book, a student guide to Beaumarchais' *Le Mariage de Figaro*, published by Macmillan in 1968: "The aim of art, it seems to me, is to build into a unity elements of experience which often appear disconnected or conflicting." The second guiding principle, relevant to all three of his major books, but particularly crucial in his study of Proust's manuscripts, was a belief in the usefulness of establishing a chronology of composition. Without knowing what came first, what rough draft led to what development, leading eventually to the published text, critical generalizations about literary genesis were bound to be speculative.

Even before the book on *Figaro* (in which play, coincidentally, we meet more than one character who had appeared in an earlier Beaumarchais play), Pugh had published two articles on Balzac's recurring characters. The received opinion on the topic, based on pre-war research by A.G. Canfield, was that Balzac introduced the device while writing *Le Père Goriot* and subsequently exploited it systematically to give unity to what would eventually become *La Comédie humaine*. The issue was complicated by the fact that Canfield, like Dr F.Lotte in his *Index des personnages fictifs* (1959), had based his findings on the text of the "Furne corrigé", i.e. Balzac's own, corrected copy of *La Comédie humaine* (1842-45). To write a biography of the hundreds of characters who reappear in the series of novels, it would be necessary to study their fate in *all* the stages of Balzac's texts, which, throughout the novelist's career, were in a state of constant

revision and re-publication. A formidable challenge, involving annual visits to the then much restricted Lovenjoul collection in Chantilly (three 10-day openings per annum, no heat or electric light until 1968). The result was *Balzac's Recurring Characters*, published by University of Toronto Press in 1973, quickly recognized not only as the standard work on the topic but a major contribution to our understanding of the growth of the *Comédie humaine*.

While continuing to publish on Balzac, Pugh turned for his second long-term project to an author with whom he had had a special affinity since his undergraduate days at Cambridge, Blaise Pascal. While the authors - a 17th century philosopher and Christian apologist as opposed to a prolific 19th century novelist - and the state of their respective literary remains could hardly be more different, the challenges that Pugh and his eventual readers would encounter were in fact remarkably similar: how to make a plausible and consistent defense of the Christian faith out of the confused tangle of manuscripts that Pascal's heirs inherited after his untimely death? Only a painstaking analysis of the documents leading to a reconstruction of the order in which the various *pensées* were set down would allow Pugh to substantiate Pascal's claim: "Qu'on ne dise pas que je n'ai rien dit de nouveau, la disposition des matières est nouvelle..." *The Composition of Pascal's Apologia*, published by the University of Toronto Press in 1985, demonstrated the same qualities that reviewers had admired in the earlier book: scrupulous attention to details, the infinite patience required of the literary detective faced with a mass of apparently inchoate material, plus a rare ability to distinguish (and simultaneously cater to) the separate needs of fellow scholars - the 150 pages of notes and appendices consist largely of a running debate with the various editors of *Les Pensées* - and general readers who wish to follow the steps in Pascal's proof of the existence of God.

In mid-career, with two major reference books under his belt, favorable reviews (although not all *pascalien*s were convinced by his arguments) and his election to the Royal Society of Canada in 1985, Anthony Pugh might have been excused for shifting his scholarly energies to the cruise control mode, with conferences, invited lectures and the occasional article to keep him busy. Instead, he chose to embark on an even more ambitious project in the field where he had served his scholarly apprenticeship thirty years earlier. In 1959, he had successfully defended a doctoral thesis on the origins of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. He rarely mentioned this work, and when he did so, only to deprecate it, less out of false modesty, perhaps, than because the acquisition of a large number of Proust manuscripts by the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1984 rendered previous work on the genesis of the novel somewhat obsolete. The crucial period 1908-1909, when Proust was still hesitating between literary criticism and a novel that describes the awakening of an artistic vocation was dealt with in a brief, but closely argued monograph, *The Birth of À la recherche du temps perdu* (French Forum, Lexington, KY, 1987).

For what was to prove his final work and crowning achievement, the journey would prove more arduous and the working conditions less than ideal. Research in Paris was complicated by the existence of two rival teams, with different degrees of access to the original manuscripts. And while Pugh was equally welcome in both camps, he occasionally spoke nostalgically of the spirit of co-operation that prevailed among his fellow *balzaciens* in Chantilly. His decision to present his eventual readers with the entire picture (rather than publish progress reports along the way) was courageous; but it ran counter to SSHRC criteria for travel grants, so the annual trips to Paris were now at his own expense. Proust's writing habits, taking up ideas or themes and discarding them, using both ends of the more than 70 notebooks that have survived, meant that establishing

any kind of chronological sequence was a daunting (and for previous scholars, well-nigh impossible) task.

In 1995, Pugh was diagnosed with leukemia, a disease he knew to be fatal, but also a capricious one, with periods of remission and renewed energy, interrupted by relapses that were sometimes dramatic, requiring hospitalization. That Anthony Pugh, in these trying conditions, found the strength to complete *The Growth of À la Recherche du temps perdu: a chronological examination of Proust's manuscripts from 1909 to 1914*, published posthumously in 2004, may be attributed to his unfailingly supportive family, to his religion - born in a Methodist family, he converted to the Church of England while at Cambridge: his faith was as unshakable as was his amused tolerance of those of us who didn't share it - and above all to his conviction that a chronological account of the working life of the author of the most important French novel of the 20th century *could* be written, and would be invaluable to future generations of scholars; which, as with his previous reference books, it undoubtedly will be.

Graham Falconer
French Department, University of Toronto
(Author's title given as of the time of writing)