

CECIL Y. LANG
1920-2003

Jerome McGann

Cecil Yelverton Lang, professor emeritus of the University of Virginia's English department, died peacefully at home of kidney failure on 15 February 2003. He was 82 years old.

Lang was one of a small group of scholars who transformed the standards of editorial practice in literary studies. Over the course of four decades Lang published a corpus of landmark editions of Victorian scholarship. His three chief works were his monumental editions of the correspondence of the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, the laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and the great cultural critic and poet Matthew Arnold. Lang published twenty volumes during his career.

He was judged without peer in the acuity and depth of his editorial commentaries and annotations, and in the elegance of his scholarship. Reviewing Lang's edition of the Tennyson letters, Dwight Culler pronounced him "The Prince of Editors." His distinction in England was such that he was elected a member of the British Academy and a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

A native North Carolinian, he took his undergraduate degree and an M.A. at Duke University (1941-42) and then joined the Air Force, where he served four years in the Pacific during WWII. He returned to resume his studies at Harvard, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1949. He subsequently taught at Yale, at the Claremont Graduate School, at Syracuse University, and at the University of Chicago before coming to the University of Virginia in 1966, where he held the John Stewart Bryan chair of English Literature until his retirement in 1991.

Lang is survived by his wife of 51 years, Violette, a son Francois-Michel of Bethesda, Maryland, and several nephews and nieces.