

In memoriam Fred Burwick

I first met Fred Burwick at the 1984 conference of the *Gesellschaft für englische Romantik* (GER) at Paderborn: on our coach trip to Corvey, where we were shown and introduced to the newly discovered Romantic-period Corvey corpus, he unceremoniously chose the free seat beside me – he was curious to get to know me. In no time at all, we were discussing hermeneutics, how Schleiermacher's differed from Luther's, why today Dilthey is so underappreciated and how Gadamer's version is, at core, so surprisingly revolutionary. "We must stay in touch," he said at our parting. And we did. For 38 years.

Fred was born Frederick Lorrain Burwick on March 17, 1936 in Pomona, California. After earning a BA at the University of La Verne, he attended Cal State LA before completing doctoral studies in English Literature at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1965. He then immediately joined the English faculty at UCLA.

Fred Burwick's range of knowledge was legendary. No subject matter was too high for him, no detail beneath his notice. You thought you could surprise him with a new discovery of your own? He would listen, hear you out, and then add, "Yes, and of course..." Fade out.

At heart a Comparatist with a strong interdisciplinary leaning, he took a vivid interest in Romantic-era aesthetics, natural philosophy, medicine, and psychology and in the cross-fertilizations of European Romanticisms. In consequence, Fred Burwick became the founding editor of *European Romantic Review* and one of the leading figures of NASSR, the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism.

Almost until the end, Fred – seemingly indefatigable – was travelling, researching in archives and libraries, editing, writing, reviewing. In addition to 140 scholarly articles, he published over 30 books, from *The Damnation of Newton: Goethe's Color Theory and Romantic Perception* (1986) to *A History of Romantic Literature* (presented at the 2019 NASSR conference in Chicago), from *Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination* (which received the Outstanding Book of the Year Award of the American Conference on Romanticism in 1996) to *Romanticism: Keywords* (2015). But it wasn't all easy sailing: for example, after having spent a whole summer deciphering and transcribing (in pencil!) manuscripts by Thomas de Quincey (a tough task in the first place – Fred: "His hand is just AWFUL! Like a bird that's hopped into an inkpot and then all over the page!"), Fred was robbed of all of his transcripts at Frankfurt central station. He stoically shook his head at his own naiveté – and without complaining went back to the same task the following year, to do it all over again.

Fred's main driving force was his boundless enthusiasm. As soon as he had discovered something, he had to share it. And his enthusiasm was catching. I suppose that was one of the reasons why his students adored him so much: not only for his immense knowledge – but he also burnt for what he was researching and teaching. He believed in its importance. He had that spark. And he was unequalled at explaining things: once, at a conference, I had maintained (following Jakobson) that the tropes of metaphor and metonymy were *radically* different and therefore could not possibly be merged. *Coram publico*, he gave me an example from Alexander Pope, a phrase that was incontrovertibly both metaphor and metonymy – I bowed my head, I stood corrected, but not humiliated, for that was never Fred's style.

Can one ever go too far in one's scholarly enthusiasm? After the controversy over what Fred had identified as Coleridge's translation of Goethe's *Faust*, a colleague who did not allow himself any judgment in the matter itself commented understandingly, "You know, Fred, *being Fred*, thought he had something." "Fred, being Fred," that wraps it up. Fred's final response to his detractors (long-time colleagues, who, however, had not even contacted him before they went public): "I thanked them. They gave the book enormous publicity. None of my books ever received so much press coverage nor sold so rapidly."

Fred Burwick was also unusually generous: over decades, we shared much of our research, often before it was published. And I do not think I was the only one; in fact, I believe I was the norm rather than the exception. Nor did his generosity stop there: he once told me of a hidden treasure in the Huntington Library – there was a major research project lying there: "It's for you, Christoph. I already have my hands full." As it turned out, so had I. But the gesture is unforgettable.

For a full two years (1992 through 1994), Fred was Director of the UC Education Abroad Program at the university of Göttingen – approachable to a fault, lending all his ears and a helping hand wherever he could, he was loved by 'his' exchange students. It wasn't, he confided to me, his first time in Göttingen: he had gone there after high school and tried to enroll at university. They told him his American high school diploma was no equivalent to a German *Abitur*, but they allowed him to take courses and attend lectures on the condition that at the same time he prepared to take the German *Abitur* examination as an external student at one of Göttingen's *Gymnasien*. He agreed to do that. You won't find that in Fred's CV, but he did.

At the time of Fred Burwick's later stay at Göttingen, I was commuting, by train and on a weekly basis, between Kiel, where we lived, and Bamberg, where I held my first professorial position. Göttingen is on the line between Bamberg and Kiel, so I would stop

over at Göttingen, meet with Fred for a couple of hours, and then continue my trip. It was during one of these visits that Fred suggested we should swap positions: he would teach my courses at Bamberg University and I his at UCLA. We did that in 1997. We exchanged jobs, cars, houses, but not, as Fred would later put it over-enthusiastically, "everything" – but still we joked about that *Changing Places* period of our lives and how, sometimes, life does indeed imitate art, although never exactly so. One day, while I was in Claremont, living in the Burwicks' house, and Fred in Gundelsheim, living in ours, my wife asked me on the phone could I please ask Roswitha, Fred's wife, what Fred liked best for breakfast, for whatever she placed in front of him, he would not touch it but was talking about Thomas de Quincey all the time. I turned to Roswitha and asked her, and I shall never forget her dry answer: "Oh, it doesn't really matter. He talks of de Quincey all the time."

At the 2004 NASSR conference in Boulder, Fred Burwick suggested that NASSR and the GER (whose president I had become in the meantime) establish special relations. The motion was carried unanimously and allowed me, in the following years, to negotiate the same status with regard to BARS, the French SERA, the Japanese JAER, and the Nordic and Polish Societies for the study of Romanticism. But it all began with Fred Burwick, the untiring bridge builder, great communicator, reconciling go-between and honest broker. If today our sister societies are more closely interconnected than ever before, and on a global scale, too, this is only because of Fred Burwick. He triggered it. In 2005, in recognition of his unique role in international Romantic studies, the German Society for English Romanticism made Frederick Burwick the only Honorary Lifetime Member we have ever had and honored him, on the occasion of his 70th birthday, with a *Festschrift* (*A View in the Rear-Mirror: Romantic Aesthetics, Culture, and Science Seen from Today*, 2006). (I have it here in my hand. An e-mail of his, dated May 19, 2006, falls out. He thanks me for the *Festschrift*. "Our friendship over the years has been both sustaining and motivating. With immense gratitude – Yours, Fred." Some compliments are humiliating. It just hurts.)

Nobody who ever met Fred Burwick at a conference will ever forget the man, nor will conferences that he frequented ever be the same without him. Can one ever forget Fred's chuckle or his pearling laughter? Or his "Come, I want you to meet..."? Casual and approachable for everyone from breakfast until after hours, but invariably dressed in dark-blue blazer and tie when he was presenting himself.... helpful in need, even in darkest hours... wise in advice ("Do you really want to die on *that* battlefield, Christoph?") and strategically reticent: I asked him once, after my first of many Wordsworth Summer Conferences in Grasmere, did his UCLA students (mostly undergrads, some not even from

English) know that he gave them the opportunity to meet, in person and for days on end, all the really Big Names in Romantic Studies? "No, I don't tell them. They might be intimidated. They'll find out later. That's soon enough." And, of course, he would never intimate he himself was one of them, one of the Big Names on the international scene.

After Jonathan Wordsworth's death in June 2006, Fred and I, with the help of good souls who had done all the necessary preparatory work, headed the 2006 Wordsworth Summer School and steered it through. When these two weeks were over, we again sat next to each other on a coach, this time one that took us from Grasmere back to Oxenholme train station. We reminisced on how bruised and scarred some of us escape their teachers and supervisors. "Fred, you know I'm not a Christian. But I have always believed you should forgive those who trespass against us not only for *their* sake, but more importantly for our *own* sake, so that we may become free of the past and thereby do not allow to be defined by what's been done *to us* but rather by what *we do*." Fred turned his head and faced me: "Boy. Some don't get that in a lifetime." And he gave me that smile.

Everyone has their own memories of Fred Burwick, their own 'Fred moments'. And that is alright, that's the way it should be. Let the man be reflected and refracted in the kaleidoscope of our memories. That is only appropriate, for the man contained multitudes.

But whatever our varying personal memories of Fred Burwick may be, I think no one ever imagined he would retire and stop working before he died – no, like a soldier, he would die in his scholarly boots. And of course he did: Fred Burwick died on March 16, 2022, on the eve of his 86th birthday, after having received the final proofs of his latest, now last, book. The proofreading is now in the hands of his wife Roswitha.

I think the best that can be said about an academic teacher is that he or she made a difference. Fred Burwick, it must be said, made a difference. A very big one. Our loss is enormous.

"We that are young shall never see so much, nor live so long." (*King Lear*)

Christoph Bode, LMU Munich

