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IN MEMORIAM: A. WALTON LITZ (1929-2014)



From the 1950s to the early 1990s, A. Walton Litz was a preeminent modernist scholar. In addition to two widely-read books on Joyce—*The Art of James Joyce: Method and Design in “Ulysses” and “Finnegans Wake”* (1961), the starting-point for all genetic studies of *Ulysses*; and the introductory *James Joyce* (1966)—and many articles and editions, he wrote important books and articles on several major modernist poets and (perhaps surprisingly) Jane Austen.

At Joyce and MLA conferences Litz delivered polished talks in a soft Southern accent. Especially memorable were the parties and receptions, which he treated as extended dinner parties he could congenially host. His generosity was legendary: he’d respond to a question like a living MLA Bibliography and Linked-In database with the name of a book or article to read, a library to visit, a person to write to. He might also introduce you to someone he thought you’d like to know. Some of my best and longest lasting friendships began this way.

Litz was also a highly effective administrator and award-winning teacher at Princeton. He supervised many Ph.D. dissertations on a wide range of modernist topics. His intellectual curiosity was infectious, and he made an indelible impression. “I wanted to be exactly like Walt” (Sebastian Knowles). “He knew what needed to be done, what could be done within a certain amount of time. He tried to match what was available to people’s interests” (Ron Bush). “I think of how Walt worked behind the scenes, with all its associations of benevolence and intrigue. He cleared the way for me” (Vicki Mahaffey). “Walt had a skyscraper demeanor, dauntingly unscalable at times, yet a stirring example” (Robert Spoo). “Hugh Kenner once told me that he thought Walt was the best graduate student mentor he had ever known” (Bill Quillian).

He seemed to embody everything a professor and scholar could and should be, and he gave me several important gifts. As I floundered on a dissertation, he pointed me to Joyce’s *Ulysses* manuscripts. He introduced me to Hans Gabler, who hadn’t yet thought of editing *Ulysses*.

IN MEMORIAM, CONT'D

And when Garland Publishing's Gavin Borden offered him the General Editorship of the project that became *The James Joyce Archive*, he declined and suggested me.

In the early 1990s, alcohol ended Walt's career. He retired early, and the best-connected person I knew disappeared almost completely. He survived for over twenty years until he died of respiratory failure in June, aged 84.

A. Walton Litz showed me the path to a professional lifetime with *Ulysses* and how to travel on it, and I will always be profoundly grateful to him for that.

Michael Groden