

**RUSSELL P. SEBOLD (1928-2014)  
A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION**

DAVID T. GIES  
University of Virginia

It might have been in June, 1975 or 1976 when, as a young professor of Spanish, I wandered down to the (at the time) rather lugubrious, velvet curtained-lined dining hall in the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid. I was there doing research for my second book, struggling to find source material and failing (yet again) to comprehend the arcane "rules" of the Biblioteca Nacional and the Archivo Histórico Nacional (slowly I was discovering how perceptive Larra had been in his assessment of Spanish bureaucracy: "El señor no se ha levantado todavía," "el amo acaba de salir," "hoy a ido a los toros"). As was the custom at the time, diners were open to sharing a table with strangers, so I settled in next to a distinguished looking chap who seemed amenable to being interrupted by an unknown and (dare I confess?) relatively clueless young scholar.

Can it have been nearly 40 years ago that I met Russell P. ("Bud") Sebold? I knew his name, of course, from the impressive articles and editions he had already published on the Spanish eighteenth century. His four-volume edition of Isla's masterpiece, *Fray Gerundio de Campaças*, had been obligatory reading for my graduate school comprehensive exams, but I also knew his work on Iriarte, Torres Villarroel, and, more particularly, his stunning collection of articles on eighteenth-century poetry called *El rapto de la mente: Poética y poesía dieciochescas*. In fact, it seemed that every year Professor Sebold published an important book or edition on some aspect of a century that practically no one paid attention to at the time, or, if they did pay attention, that attention was couched in vague disdain.

I had been fortunate enough to study at the University of Pittsburgh where a then-new professor named Javier Herrero considered the eighteenth century a field worthy of study, so his students were well versed in the work of Russell P. Sebold. Over one of the meals that became standard for me at the Residencia, "Bud" —as he insisted his friends call him— asked me if I would like to review a book for the journal he edited, *Hispanic Review*. Would I ever! Thus began my long and fruitful relationship with the US's premier professional journal, a journal that under Sebold's stewardship earned international respect for rigor and intellectual excitement.

Bud and I became fast friends. So much so, that most of my colleagues here and abroad assumed that I had earned my doctorate under his guidance. Not true, but it was almost "as if." I learned so much over the years from Sebold's publications and conversations that I cannot extricate my knowledge or understanding of the two periods he dominated —the

Enlightenment and Romanticism— from what he taught me. I did not agree with all of his perceptions or interpretations, but it was (and is) impossible not to take them seriously, and to revere the astonishing scholarship, passion, and conviction that he infused in every sentence he wrote.

Bud wrote in Spanish. Exclusively. And his ability to dominate a "foreign" language, with impressive clarity and suppleness, earned him the coveted designation of Corresponding Member of the Spanish Royal Academy, along with many other recognitions over the years. We overlapped at national and international conferences, visited each other for personal and professional reasons, and frequently talked on the phone.

I will not rehearse his curriculum vitae here; readers of this journal will be well versed in his ideas and will have read dozens of his exciting studies. Bud helped to create a field of study for hundreds of young scholars (how many of us can make such a claim?), bringing the Spanish eighteenth century into focus and respectability. His legacy will live on for a very long time.



R. P. Sebold at the Residencia de Estudiantes with (from rear left) Harriet S. Turner, Enrique Pupo-Walker, E. Inman Fox, RPS, Jaime Salinas, Alberto Porqueras-Mayo; José García Velasco, María Ángeles Gutiérrez Fraile, Alicia Gómez Navarro; David T. Gies. 1994.

Professionally, we will remember Russell P. Sebold for his towering intellect, Herculean work ethic, and passion for his chosen field. Personally, I will remember his conversations, his great sense of humor, his perceptiveness in marrying one of the smartest and most elegant women I know (Jane), and his unconditional love for his dogs, Webster and Henry. I picture Bud somewhere out there, surrounded by his family, his students, his library of original eighteenth-century books (now at the Sala Russell P. Sebold at the Universidad de Alicante), and Henry and Webster. It's an image I will cherish.



## NOTA IMPORTANTE

El presente número de DIECIOCHO será el último que aparezca en papel. A partir de la próxima entrega (38.1, primavera de 2015) la revista se publicará en formato digital y será completamente GRATUITA. Si desea Vd. estar informado de la aparición de los sucesivos números, envíe, por favor, un mensaje electrónico a [dtg@virginia.edu](mailto:dtg@virginia.edu).