



EDMUND FRYDE

Edmund Boleslaw Fryde 1923–1999

EDMUND FRYDE liked to dwell on the quirks of fate. It was a game. He liked to explain how by some round-about chain of causation you, his friend, came to be where you were because of some long-past chance action on his part. Bonds, however far-fetched, were important. That Edmund himself, the gifted Jewish boy of cosmopolitan upbringing from Warsaw, should have spent over fifty years of his life in Aberystwyth, resigned to having been stranded there and, in his later years, increasingly content with his fate, was not to be predicted. The chain of events which led to this was a complicated one and—there were memories which brought pain—much of it he dwelt on rarely, but he took it for common knowledge among his friends.

The chain began with the sudden removal of the fifteen-year old Boleslaw from his Warsaw school to Bradfield College in 1938, a move which ensured that he survived the war. Then came historical research in a field chosen for him by another, which made a medievalist of him, and an appointment to lecture at Aberystwyth in a subject which was not his, economic history. And then came the succession of chances which brought about a sequence of shifts of interest, to constitutional history, to historiography, to Italian humanism, to Greek manuscripts, and lastly to a field which he found strangely sympathetic, that of learning and scholarship in Byzantium. To each area of interest he committed himself entirely, publishing important discoveries; in each he also gave rein to his gift for synthesis, for presenting the wide picture, one in which however the human presence invariably remained prominent.

Both Edmund's parents spent their youth in Czestochowa, at that time a Russian city of some 100,000 inhabitants. Its citizens could cross to Germany or Austria-Hungary with no more than a frontier-pass. Edmund's mother's family used to make annual visits to either Vienna or Breslau. His father's maternal grandfather, called Bursztynski, had been the official representative of the Jewish community in south-eastern Poland, and the first Jew allowed to settle in Czestochowa, in 1829. His son became a famous doctor. His grandsons emigrated to Russia and became distinguished civil servants. His daughter, however, at the age of sixteen, married a forty-nine year old bachelor, Henryk Fryde, Edmund's grandfather. Henryk Fryde, a self-educated man, had made himself rich by a franchise in vodka, and become owner of a village called Kraszewice, near Czestochowa, where he lived more in the style of the Polish landlords with whom he consorted than of a Jew. He sold his property in 1903 after a rising by the peasants and the burning of his house, and moved to town. His son Mieczyslaw was ten. Mieczyslaw studied mathematics and philosophy in Berlin in 1912–14. While there he joined the Russian Social Democratic Party. During the war he became a leader in the revolutionary socialist underground, first in Czestochowa, later in Warsaw and Lodz, organising sabotage of German war factories. After the war, a brief period as a civil servant in the new Polish government came to an end when he was discovered at a secret meeting of socialists, and had to spend some months in prison. He then for a short while became a Privat-Dozent in mathematics at Warsaw university. But with the death of his professor, a victim of a bomb intended for the President (who was shot dead by an assassin minutes later), he realized that, as a Jew, now lacking patronage, he could not hope to advance his career in the subject of his first love. He had, by virtue of being in 1920 a registered student in law, acquired by government decree a degree in law. He began to practise. In post-1919 Poland, when many wartime revolutionaries found themselves in government posts, his contacts in the socialist underground proved helpful. By 1928 he was legal adviser to the Polish Ministry of Finance; in 1936 he became also a legal adviser to the ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time, he pursued a private scholarly career, publishing widely on statistics, on the one hand, and, on the other, on public credit. After the Second World War, in which he served in the office of the Polish Prime Minister in Exile and later in the Inter-Allied Commission on War Crimes, he began an academic career in the USA (he was now known as

Matthew Fryde), teaching Economics and the History of Science at the universities of Columbia and Yeshiva.¹

Edmund's mother, Salomea Ludwika (Sarah Louise) Rosenzweig, was the daughter of Nathan Rosenzweig, a rich timber merchant. The home was cultured and politically radical. The two elder brothers were recruited by the Social Democratic Party in 1915, betrayed, and imprisoned by the Germans from 1916 to 1918. Like Sarah, they remained radical, even idealistic, in the increasingly reactionary Poland of the inter-war years. Edward, the eldest, was a chemist and inventor, but, on principle, refused to take out patents. Very few of the large Rosenzweig family survived the Second World War. One cousin who as a child did survive, in the Warsaw Ghetto, then in hiding, and then in Bergen-Belsen, and was sent as an orphan to Palestine after liberation, became the novelist, Uri Orlev; his experience of the war underlies his novel translated into English in 1979 as *The Lead Soldiers*.

Sarah Rozenzweig had run away from home in 1911 in order to study Polish literature at Krakow University. She was a pretty and vivacious woman, passionately fond of art. She encouraged Edmund, her only child, to read widely in Polish literature, both prose and poetry. (In the 1980s a friend travelling with Edmund from Aberystwyth to London by train was, to his initial embarrassment, regaled with long and loud recitations from memory of Polish poetry.) She arranged for him to be taught French and German, and later English. When he came to school in England at the age of fifteen he could read both French and English with fair fluency, German less well. He studied the piano for eight years and used to play with pleasure. With his mother, he came to know museums and galleries. She loved to travel, and in her company during school vacations Edmund came to know many of the cities of Europe.

Bolesław Edmund Fryde was born on 16 July 1923 and called Bolesław (Bolek to family and friends). He enjoyed a happy, indulged, rather solitary childhood, living in an expensive apartment. He once, when he was twelve, on his way home from school, heard the noise of a mob and took refuge in the gateway of a nearby house; it was the closest he came to a pogrom. In 1932 he was sent to Mikolaj Rej Gymnasium, one of the best Warsaw schools. He was, by his own account, no more than an average pupil, not being pushed by his parents. He remembered

¹ A collection of tributes to Matthew M. Fryde first printed in *The Polish Review*, 10, no. 2 (1965), together with a bibliography of his work, was published as a pamphlet, *In memoriam Matthew M. Fryde* (New York, 1965).

two teachers in particular for their excellence, the classics master and the history master, Edward Bartel. Edmund enjoyed his Latin and Greek and acquired a taste for Greek literature which was to lie dormant for many years before it came to bring depth to his last book, when the transmission of the Greek classics came under his close attention. Above all, his time as a schoolboy was spent in reading. His father, a frequently remote figure in his life, had a large library, of six thousand books, and encouraged his son to make free use of it. Edmund remembered beginning to use it when he was eleven. His father would discuss books but would never direct his reading. Edmund recalled using the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Macaulay's *History of England* was there in five volumes in Polish translation. The first author he remembered reading in English was Oscar Wilde.

Edmund was never sure why he was sent to Bradfield College in 1938. His father once turned up unexpectedly at school and received permission to take his son to London for a weekend. Whilst reading an account of the Polish Enigma connection, after his father's death, he came across the name of a man he remembered coming to meet his father in his hotel room. He came to suspect that his father, a mathematician with a prodigious memory, may have been involved in intelligence work and that having a son at Bradfield was a cover for visits to London. It was his father's diplomatic passport that enabled him and his parents, on holiday in France at the beginning of September 1939, to enter Britain. Edmund did not find the teaching at Bradfield stimulating, but, compared with Polish schools, it was not anti-semitic; and it had a good library. And he could play chess in the back pew during chapel. It was there that Boleslaw became Edmund.

In January 1942 Edmund went up to an empty wartime Oxford, to Balliol College. He used to recall the particular early kindness of J. M. Thompson, of Magdalen College, his tutor for one term, and a later tutor, W. A. Pantin, of Oriel College. In the autumn of that same year came the event which most scarred his life. His mother, so loved by her son and neglected by her husband, took her own life. His greatest support at this difficult time came from William Peters, a contemporary at Balliol, who became his closest friend, and a constant friend for 57 years. Forty years after their first acquaintance, when William Peters was High Commissioner in Malawi, Edmund was his guest. This visit to Africa became a favourite subject of reminiscence in Edmund's later years.

Edmund sat his final examinations in June 1944 but was unable to take his degree until December and, encouraged by Goronwy Edwards, who

had been his tutor for one term, Edmund began research. In his finals he had been placed only in the Second Class: as R. W. Southern explained in a letter 'his work was of First Class quality and he only failed to obtain the class which he deserved through a certain diffidence which hampered him in the examination'. To those who only knew Edmund in his maturity, the diffidence is hard to imagine. The subject of his research was one central to Goronwy Edwards's own interests: 'Edward III's war finances, 1337-41'. For better or worse, Edwards made of Edmund a medievalist; he also, as Edmund would recall, taught him the importance of writing clearly. With the help of a Polish government research scholarship and support from his father, Edmund was able to continue his research until 1947. During this period Edmund also, on the side, found employment calendaring some of the uncatalogued medieval Balliol archives; the high point in this work was his discovery of a deed of 1321 which named all the fellows of the college, providing the only point in medieval times at which the whole membership is known. On 31 July 1947 he was awarded his doctorate and on the same day appointed to a lectureship in Economic History at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Edmund used to say that R. F. Treharne had appointed him at Aberystwyth in the mistaken belief that he was an economic historian. Be that as it may, Edmund certainly became one, if only by virtue of having to lecture on economic history for twenty years. His knowledge acquired depth as a result of being invited by M. M. Postan to contribute a chapter on medieval public credit to the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*. This invitation led to many years of intensive research in the Public Record Office. Economic history and especially financial history was moreover a subject Edmund had grown up with. His father's interests, even before he began to practise law, had embraced economics and history. During the 1920s and 1930s Mieczyslaw Fryde published widely on statistics and medieval economic history. Intellectually, Edmund owed much to his father. His father's obituarists describe the extraordinary range of Matthew Fryde's learning. Edmund himself regarded it as something exceptional, embracing creative and analytical abilities beyond his own; in comparison, he, Edmund, was 'a good squirrel', blessed, it has to be said, with a phenomenal memory. The shared interest of father and son in medieval finance found its monument in the chapter in volume III of *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* (published in 1963), 'Public credit, with special reference to north-western Europe'. Of this joint contribution of father and son, E. M. Carus-Wilson wrote that it 'contains so much that is new that the volume is worth having for this alone';

while the chapter was described by Yves Renouard in a review in the *English Historical Review* as ‘entirely novel in content’ and ‘a classic of the economic and financial history of the medieval West’.² It is the mastery of medieval finance and accounting that gives sinew to Edmund’s work on medieval history.

The Clarendon Press expressed willingness to publish Edmund’s thesis as a book, suitably trimmed and with some of the more specialized sections published as separate articles. Though some of these articles were published he became dissatisfied with the idea of the book and it was abandoned. In the early years after his appointment at Aberystwyth he published other articles on medieval financial and commercial history. The earliest of these on which he looked back with favour was ‘Deposits of Hugh Despenser the Younger with Italian bankers’ (1951), a piece of work which owed its origin to the kindness of Roger Ellis in offering transcripts of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian documents he had made in the Public Record Office; several of these articles appeared in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, a journal which, unlike some, allowed ample elbow room. Most of Edmund’s articles in this field are collected in *Studies in Medieval Trade and Finance* (1983). A reviewer of this volume commented on the ‘meticulous concern for documentation’.³

When Edmund was working for his thesis one inescapable character made his presence felt; later, when he came to do research on the Medici Bank, and again, when doing research on the discontents of peasants, this same character kept obtruding. The over-reaching William de la Pole, peerless in his financial skills as in his ruthlessness, ‘the most influential merchant of the Middle Ages’, could only be exorcised by a biography: *William de la Pole, Merchant and King’s Banker, d. 1366*, written in the 1980s and published in 1988. It did not embody much new work; rather, it was a condensation of earlier articles on Edward III’s finances, and material from the thesis, with particular focus on the chief protagonist. This volume was Edmund’s farewell to high finance.

The Public Record Office became Edmund’s home for long periods during vacations in these years. He acquired a formidable mastery of the *fonds*, and of palaeography and diplomatic. Indeed, in 1955 he came close to appointment as Reader in Diplomatic at Oxford (and was happy in later years to maintain that the right man had been chosen). He came to

² Review by Carus-Wilson in *Economica*, NS 32 (1965), 110; by Renouard in *English Historical Review*, 80 (1965), 114.

³ *English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), 221.

know well a famous generation of Public Record Office staff. He remembered H. C. Johnson affectionately. C. A. F. Meekings became a friend for life. It was as a habitu  of the PRO that he came to know V. H. Galbraith, one whom he used to hold in the highest esteem, for his scholarship and his radical and irreverent outlook, and to whom he felt particularly close. Through Galbraith he came to know May McKisack, pupil of Powicke, also later a source of much help and friendship.

Not that Edmund's teaching was restricted in these early years to economic history. He carried much of the burden of teaching in British medieval history, working closely in these years with R. F. Walker. During these early years he taught the man he looked back on as the ablest undergraduate of his teaching career, Gwyn A. Williams. In 1954 Edmund was invited by Sir Maurice Powicke to become assistant editor of the second edition of the Royal Historical Society *Handbook of British Chronology*—a recognition of his familiarity with medieval sources. The second edition appeared in 1961. Edmund's contribution to this edition is reflected by the words of Sir Maurice in a note added to the preface: '[Dr Fryde] is the actual editor of this second edition'. One of Edmund's proposals for the second edition was that the officers of state of the Commonwealth period should be included. This suggestion, however, met with a gentle rebuff from Sir Maurice: 'Her Majesty is our patron'. Among Edmund's fondest boasts was that it was he, a Polish Jew, when he became editor of the third edition, published in 1986, who ensured that these officials at last found recognition. The *Handbook* is a fundamental work of reference for British historians. Edmund's contribution to the second edition of the *Handbook*, and to the third (the sections for which he was responsible are detailed on p. ix), serve as an indication of his capacity for close, meticulous, and unobtrusive scholarship. It was while working on the *Handbook* that Edmund made his only incursion into Welsh history, editing the volume presented to Sir Goronwy Edwards, the *Book of Prests of the King's Wardrobe 1294–5* (1962), an edition of the financial and military records of Edward I's campaign to quell the last major Welsh rebellion against him.

Work on the *Handbook* extended Edmund's interests to new areas; in particular, as a result of revising the lists of medieval parliaments, to constitutional history. A consequence of this was his collaboration with Edward Miller in editing *Historical Studies of the English Parliament* in two volumes (1970), a most useful volume, highly intelligent in its choice of articles and in the quality of the introductory comment. In 1965, the year he agreed with the Cambridge University Press to edit these volumes

with Miller, he also agreed to edit a similar collection of papers of 'Studies in institutional, social and economic history of late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages', but later under pressure of work withdrew from this agreement. Another proposal made by him about the same time was for an edition of select documents on 'the internal crisis of 1296–98 in England', a volume to be based mainly on the Memoranda Rolls and Ancient Correspondence in the Public Record Office (work subsequently in good part achieved in Michael Prestwich, *Documents illustrating the crisis of 1297–98 in England*, Camden Society, 4th Series, vol. 24).

In 1959 Edmund had begun to teach as a special subject 'English history 1485–1558 and its European background'. He had already, as a protégé of Goronwy Edwards, begun to work for the British committee for the revision of Potthast, *Repertorio delle Fonti storiche del Medio Evo*. In 1966 he first attended the Potthast General Assembly in Rome as British representative. He set about learning Italian and began to make regular visits to Italy, often twice a year. These visits stimulated his interest in Italian art and, as with any enthusiasm on his part, kindled a desire to teach on the subject. Treharne retired in 1966, to be succeeded in the chair by Fergus Johnston, a person altogether more indulgent to Edmund's wishes. Edmund began to lecture in a variety of new fields. One of them was History of Art, at first, on Italian art from Roman times to 1700. In later years, up till his retirement in 1990, he lectured on European (and British) art of many periods. These lectures were accompanied by slides drawn from an enormous and lovingly accumulated stock which included many made from Edmund's own photographs. The lectures had a devoted following. None gave Edmund greater pleasure. But although the subject lay close to his heart, Edmund always regarded himself as too much of an amateur, too lacking in technical expertise, to publish in this field. An article on Lorenzo de' Medici's patronage of art was the closest he came.

During 1966 Edmund married Natalie Davies, who had been his student. There followed a decade or so of frequent travel, many conferences and much contact with continental scholars. It was a period of fruitful collaboration. But then Natalie Fryde, now an established medieval historian, took her own path. In personal terms the marriage had not proved successful. A divorce came in 1981.

In 1969 Edmund had edited a revision of C. Oman's *The Great Revolt of 1381*, and the following year published an article 'Parliament and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381' (reprinted in *Studies*). His 1981 Historical Association pamphlet *The Great Revolt of 1381* incorporated his rounded view of the subject; it is an admirable example of his ability to embrace a com-

plicated subject and represent it concisely and clearly. It was in 1969 that an invitation came from Edward Miller to contribute a chapter on 'Peasant rebellion and peasant discontents' to the *Cambridge Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 3, 1348–1500. This chapter, written jointly by Edmund and his wife Natalie, was not published until 1991. It had however provided the stimulus for what became a much more extended examination of the subject. Edmund began to think of a book-length treatment but because of the long delay in the appearance of the Cambridge volume that larger treatment had to bide its time. By then engrossed in Byzantine scholarship, he doubled back on his tracks in the early 1990s to write *Peasants and Landlords in Later Medieval England c. 1380–1525*. It is a work based on a number of detailed local studies, particularly in the west Midlands. It combines two of his strengths as a historian: on the one hand his financial acumen, and understanding of the strategies of landlords (such as the bishop of Worcester), on the other his human sympathy for the predicament of the peasants and the reasons for their occasional and sometimes violent protests.

An invitation in 1969 to write an article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on 'Historiography and historical methodology' (published in the 15th edition in 1974) steered Edmund's interest in new directions. R. R. Davies had succeeded Johnston in the chair at Aberystwyth in 1976 and had initiated an innovative compulsory course in the history degree at Aberystwyth on 'History and the writing of history'; Edmund was an enthusiastic participant. Historiography also, inevitably, drew his interests to Italy. The encyclopedia article was one he came to find unsatisfactory, but writing it had brought the growth of historical awareness to the centre of his interests, there to remain.

At this point in his career Edmund was not rooted to Aberystwyth. More than once he considered moving and applied for chairs elsewhere. But by the end of the 1970s any urge to move had waned. He may perhaps have come to sense what was clear to others: that in Aberystwyth he had come to be appreciated, within and without the university, as someone exceptional, and to be given an extraordinary degree of freedom in his department. He was moreover only beginning to discover how valuable to him was the National Library of Wales with respect to the new direction in which his scholarship was turning. In 1973 he was awarded a personal chair. It may have been a signal to him to enjoy his teaching and his research. With resignation or otherwise, he settled down. In 1988 he was elected FBA. He was deeply gratified by publication in 1996 of *Recognitions: Essays presented to Edmund Fryde*, edited by Colin

Richmond and Isobel Harvey. And about this volume he could not voice the complaint he made on the occasion of a surprise seventieth birthday party arranged for him: that he would have liked to have known in advance, in order to enjoy the pleasure of anticipation.

The germ of what became Edmund's governing interest in the last twenty years of his life was an invitation by A. G. Dickens, a close friend, to contribute a chapter on Lorenzo de' Medici to the volume *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty, 1400–1800* (1977) edited by Dickens. The article was 'Lorenzo de' Medici: high finance and the patronage of art and learning'. While Edmund's collection of papers, *Humanism and Renaissance Historiography* (1983), did not include this article, it did include three subsequent papers on Lorenzo: one 'A survey of the historiography and of the primary sources', one on his patronage of art, and one on his library. Lorenzo had moved to the centre of Edmund's interest. About this time indeed he contemplated writing a biography of Lorenzo. That half-formed ambition was however overtaken by the realisation of the significance of a discovery he had made. The article on Lorenzo's library, the most innovative of the volume, was the precursor of what became Edmund's next major work. While investigating the library, Edmund had come across the two inventories of Medici manuscripts made about 1508 by Fabio Vigili. The inventory of Greek manuscripts was slightly known but had not been used for a systematic reconstruction of the Medici library; the inventory of Latin manuscripts was barely known at all. Reconstruction of the library with the accompanying identification of manuscripts and the pursuit of transmissions of texts became Edmund's chief preoccupation. The resulting work was eventually published in two volumes as *Greek Manuscripts in the Private Library of the Medici, 1468–1510* (Aberystwyth, 1996). A corresponding work on the Latin manuscripts—manuscripts of less importance—was set aside as a future project. The Medici Greek manuscripts, in 1494 probably about 600 in number, constituted one of the five most significant collections in the West at the time. By 1494 almost all the important ancient Greek authors were represented in the library; Aristotle in particular, by some eighty codices of text and commentary. The notable absences in the surviving collection appear in large part to be accounted for by depredations in the years 1494–1508 after the expulsion of the Medici from Florence.

Many scholars would have been more than content to have produced an annotated edition of Vigili's inventory, making such identifications as were possible. Perhaps Edmund as a young man might have been satisfied

with such a work. By now he knew too much. He could not simply act the librarian. Many of these manuscripts played important roles in intellectual history; their significance demanded attention. Edmund's two volumes are discursive and to the general reader offer an engrossing exploration of many byways of intellectual life at this fascinating conjunction. They brought to light some unexpected discoveries: the explanation of the attribution of the unique text of the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnos of Panopolis; the likely source of the surviving tradition of Proclus's commentary on Euclid's *Elements*; and the identification of the manuscript used by William de Moerbeke for his translation of Aristotle's *De Anima*. But in opting for a broad canvas, Edmund sometimes slipped below the standards of meticulousness which characterized his early work. An appreciative notice of *Greek Manuscripts* by D. F. Jackson in *Scriptorium* has to correct a number of details (such as manuscript numbers), and offers besides some thirty additional or alternative identifications of items in the Vigili inventory.⁴

Edmund's interest in Italian humanism led to his frequenting Arnaldo Momigliano's Ancient History Seminar at the Warburg Institute and to a treasured friendship. He later came to feel that he owed to Momigliano a greater debt than to any other scholar. If Galbraith was the inspiration for his studies in medieval peasantry, Momigliano was for the studies in intellectual tradition. Edmund rejoiced at having left behind the study of the misdeeds of medieval tycoons—'cats fighting rats' was how he sometimes characterized the theme—a study to which he had been led by chance, for the study of the works of men who had sustained civilised values. His trajectory might be viewed as one which began with reaching an understanding of affairs of the powerful, a wholly cynical view, such as came naturally to his father; which then moved to an understanding of the plight of the downtrodden, something grounded in a sympathy held in common by both parents; and finally to an understanding of those who strived for things of spiritual value such as his mother had cherished.

A feature of the Medici Greek manuscripts is that the great majority of them originated in Byzantine scriptoria (as distinct from being copies commissioned from scribes living in Florence). Edmund's work on the Medici library drew him deeply into many areas of Byzantine scholarship. Some of his conclusions found a place in his two volumes on Lorenzo's Greek manuscripts. But his curiosity had been roused. His personal need to

⁴ 'Fabio Vigili's inventory of Medici Greek manuscripts', *Scriptorium*, 52 (1998), 199–204.

satisfy curiosity about many of the questions brought to the surface during his work on the Medici library, and the inner compulsion to create order, led to his last completed book: *The early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261–c.1360)* (Leiden, 2000). This work, acknowledging Sir Steven Runciman's *Last Byzantine Renaissance* (1970) as its nearest predecessor, and following Runciman in its controversial use of the word 'renaissance' in this context, is a wide-ranging work of synthesis, one which is always ready to draw the background of scholarly achievement, whether intellectual, religious or political, and to indicate value, to bring people to life. Leslie Brubaker in a review welcoming the book as a good traditional overview, though one whose focus is resolutely on secular literature, calls it 'an old-fashioned book, with an intellectual framework that remains resolutely positivist', a view Edmund would not have taken amiss.⁵

Edmund was by all accounts an inspirational teacher. In the lecture theatre, as in conversation, he had a remarkable ability to bring characters to life. Martin Fitzpatrick, a colleague, who had been his student, describes him:

He set us the highest of standards without ever making them intimidating. Above all, he taught that the best way to understand history was by going to the sources. Characteristically, his lectures used one key source, whether it was Clause 39 of Magna Carta, Edward III's statute of treason, a peasant's list of grievances, an apparently complicated balance sheet or a private letter. He would expound in detail their significance, and demonstrate their wider relevance. He blew the dust off documents and talked of them as if they had just been composed and of the characters involved as if he knew them from personal experience.

His lectures on subjects outside his specialities, subjects upon which he never wrote, were as gripping as any. Apart from art, these included eighteenth-century French history—Edmund was in essence a child of the Enlightenment—and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian history. The latter was, in effect, to a large degree, a branch of his own family history. Russian history, and the two World Wars, were of abiding interest; he kept up his reading to the end. Conversation with Edmund at all times was likely to slip into an impromptu lecture—as often as not a fascinating one. On Russia, and the World Wars, it might well begin: 'The published accounts are all wrong. My father told me . . .'. For most of his life, the purpose of Rudolf Hess's flight to Scotland came into this category. Edmund loved anecdotes, and had mastered the art of telling them. One

⁵ *The Medieval Review* (2001).

of his gifts as a lecturer was to make history as alive as an anecdote. He would defend Herodotus against the charge of retailing anecdotes.

Behind the array of his friendships, Edmund was a lonely man, and behind the assertive protagonist, a vulnerable one. Family life was denied him; his marriage ended unhappily; he counted much on friends. Friendships of his early life at Aberystwyth had been largely within the university or ones which arose from his long periods in the Public Record Office. He kept in close touch with some former students. Later, as Italy, and, closer to home, the Warburg Institute, became his stamping ground, and above all the National Library of Wales—which became in effect his club—new friendships sprang up. Among the staff and readers of the National Library he found enduring ones. In his later years, he kept an open house. Many were they who had his front door key and were urged to make themselves at home in the house whether he was there or not. Visitors would be pressed to stay for meals, meals in which a place would always be found for delicacies which somehow conjured up what a Warsaw child of the 1930s might have delighted in from a superior delikatessen or patisserie. For many years there would also be the company of an amiable and intelligent Labrador, and later her stupid daughter. The death of the daughter brought to an end Edmund's going for walks; exercise was not something to be undertaken for its own sake.

Edmund could show startling impulsive generosity—to a friend in trouble, to a student in need—but could, in many ways, almost as though to put friendship to the test, make great demands of it. His friend, Colin Richmond, in an obituary, puts it in extreme terms: 'Edmund was an exasperating friend: at any time he was likely to turn into an enemy. It was not that he was unpredictable. Far from it. If—or rather when—he fell out with you, or made you fall out with him, it was because he would not compromise his devotion to a scholarly principle, his attachment to a person whom he considered worth supporting through thick and thin, or both' and 'the only terms on which one could be his friend were ones of complete capitulation.'⁶ Edmund's friends, even those so blessed with the facility of abnegation as not to have experienced becoming enemies, will all recognise the man. Alun Davies, the historian, of Swansea, a dear friend of Edmund's, warning a colleague who had not yet met Edmund, put it differently: 'Beware of his bear-hug.' Reflecting on Edmund's life, Colin Richmond remarks: 'What saved him from despair was learning.

⁶ *Renaissance Studies*, 14 (2000), 396–8.

Edmund was immensely, hugely, almost monstrously learned', and, putting into words a thought that Edmund would never have brought himself to express, 'he doggedly clung to the idea that scholarship as well as art can, and does, make a man's life worthwhile, even and especially an unhappy man's life'—Edmund himself would merely say, from time to time: 'It keeps me out of trouble.' The scholarly activity seldom ceased. Richmond's experience of being met by Edmund at Aberystwyth station with a hug and the greeting 'You know, St Augustine was wrong about Original Sin' was typical. Such greetings were still commonplace in the last year of his life when, more or less immobilised, he was busy writing a book on the growth of historical awareness in fifteenth-century Italy. Martin Fitzpatrick sets the scene of the last years: 'One would open his front door, and see him down the tiled hallway, sitting at his table, working away surrounded by a nest of papers and bathed in the side light from his kitchen window. It was like a seventeenth-century Dutch interior'.

A provisional title of the uncompleted work was *From Petrarch to Politian: the Revival of a Sense of History in the early Italian Renaissance*. Five chapters were written, chapters which would have come in the middle of the book: 'Guarino Guarini: historical interests', two on Biondo, 'Pope Nicholas V and translators of Greek historians and geographers', and 'Florentine historiography in the later fifteenth century'. In the last weeks before his death on 17 November 1999 he was contemplating his chapter on Alberti. Petrarch, Valla, and Politian lay ahead. The writing of a chapter or article would bring Edmund's intense focus onto the matter in hand. His visitors would often be treated to a resumé upon entering the house. There would always, however, in relaxed moments, be in contemplation the work beyond the one on which he was engaged. The one which lay beyond his book on humanism and art in fifteenth-century Italy was to have been a collection of portraits of historians to whom—whether he had known them well personally or not—Edmund felt particularly close. Besides two Polish historians, these were to include Marc Bloch, Helen Cam, Galbraith and Momigliano.

For Edmund people were black or white. Or sometimes perhaps pied, in so far as a man might be 'a good historian but not a nice human being', or the reverse. (Those historians who were to have appeared in his gallery of portraits were in all regards white.) Edmund loved the work of many painters and sculptors—his interest waned as one moved into the twentieth century—and had read deeply about them and was curious about their personal lives, but, always weighing them up as people as well as artists, would reluctantly admit that, while a few were, many were

indeed not nice human beings. He moved in the past as he moved in the present, unable to view events and the people concerned in them without scrutinising what he saw as moral qualities. This comes out in his writing. In lectures, and in talk, it was a trait which gave instant life to the characters of history, even though at times the gift may have verged on that of the caricaturist. To the inexpert, at least, it was memorable history. Edmund was not a religious person, but he had the utmost respect for the religious. At the end of his life he often spoke of the humanity he found in some of the leaders and scholars of the Byzantine Church, comparing them favourably with those of Rome. Gibbon, on the other hand, also much in his mind during these years, was judged, for all his insight, to fall short, too lacking in human sympathy, blind to true devoutness.

Edmund liked to be involved. For much of his time at Aberystwyth he was active in the affairs of the College, as a member of the Senate, on the Finance Committee, the Library Committee, acting as secretary of the Staff House. He could be a fixer or he could be blunt and, willy nilly, could make enemies as freely as new friends. In the 1980s when the College, under government pressure, was closing department after department—Classics, Philosophy, languages—a stand was made for Music. Edmund was partisan. He moved in the Court of the College that the decision to close the department be overturned (the motion was carried but later nullified). The Principal, agitated, was driven to say: ‘Professor Fryde. I have the impression that you wish to move a motion of no confidence in me.’ ‘No’, answered Fryde, ‘You quite misunderstand. We have far more important matters to discuss.’

DANIEL HUWS

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Note. Two invaluable portraits of Edmund Fryde are provided by the address of Martin Fitzpatrick, ‘Remembering Edmund Fryde’, printed in *In memoriam Edmund Fryde*, for the funeral, and the obituary by Colin Richmond in *Renaissance Studies*. This memoir has also had the benefit of comment by Professor R. R. Davies, Dr Isobel Harvey and Dr N. G. Wilson. William Peters provided reminiscences of Edmund when a student at Balliol. In *Recognitions*, on pp. 1–8 there is an appreciation of Edmund Fryde by Daniel Huws, and on pp. 9–17 a bibliography of his writings by Dr Isobel Harvey. Use has been made of Edmund Fryde’s surviving personal papers (which are to be donated to the National Library of Wales).