

# Romanticism, Humanism, Judaism The Legacy of Hans Eichner

## Romantik, Humanismus, Judentum Hans Eichners Vermächtnis

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## Introduction

Hans Eichner died on 8 April 2009 at age 87, after a long and successful career as scholar, teacher, and writer. The effects of this career extend beyond the corpus of Eichner's work: through his teaching, lectures, and exchanges of ideas with colleagues, he fostered and enriched the work of others in the profession. This process did not end with his death. The present volume is a document and product of it, as well as a tribute to Hans Eichner and his scholarship. It brings together contributions by Eichner's students, colleagues, and friends. The composition of the team of editors itself reflects Eichner's gift for meaningful interaction with people at every stage of a career. Hartwig Mayer was a colleague of many years' standing in the German department at the University of Toronto who became a friend and collaborator. Jean Wilson wrote her Ph.D. thesis under Eichner's supervision, while Paola Mayer took some of his courses at the undergraduate level, and was inspired by them to pursue a Ph.D. in German Studies.

This volume was originally conceived as the standard type of "essays in memory of ...," but in the end became something a little different, reflecting in more substantial and direct ways the various aspects of Hans Eichner's work as scholar, teacher, writer, and personality. The themes mentioned in the title were chosen because they address the main topics of Eichner's work as a scholar (and to some extent as a creative writer), and because they encapsulate the main foci of the essays collected in the volume.

It is fitting that "Romanticism" appears as the initial theme, for Hans Eichner made his reputation first and foremost as a scholar of German Romanticism. This occurred primarily, but not only, through his work on Friedrich Schlegel, which included co-editorship of the historical-critical edition, a monograph in the Twayne series, and a number of seminal articles. The preeminence of the theme is reflected in the volume by a cluster of essays: two directly assessing Eichner's contribution to Friedrich Schlegel scholarship, two continuing the work of

exegesis of Schlegel's oeuvre, and two on other Romantic authors, building on Eichner's methodology and findings.

The term "Humanism" applies to certain authors on whom Hans Eichner worked, such as Goethe and Thomas Mann (the latter interest reflected in the volume by two essays), and to the tradition of thought and values which they represent, however problematically. On a less obvious but far-reaching level, "Humanism" captures the moral dimension of Eichner's life and work: his concern with the Holocaust, the history of European Jewry, and the broad ethical issues these raise; his commitment to teaching such issues; and his insistence on the need for a *Germanistik* that would acknowledge an obligation in this area. This theme and Eichner's commitment to it are reflected in more or less direct ways in many of the essays, both those dealing with Jewish themes and those assessing the legacy of Hans Eichner the scholar.

The second theme thus shades into the third, "Judaism," the most pervasive and arguably the most important, in Hans Eichner's life and in this volume. "Judaism" shaped Eichner's life and identity as an individual; it also refers to one of his scholarly concerns, manifest, for example, in his interest in the rehabilitation of forgotten Jewish writers, and to the above-mentioned commitment to bring to light both the humanist and the criminal aspects of the German "legacy" to the world. Three contributions address his seminal essay *Der Blick auf den Ettersberg*, which captures the paradox of the proximity yet mutual invisibility of Weimar and Buchenwald. This theme became increasingly important to Eichner in later life; it was the major subject of his reading in the last few years before his death, and he was planning a monograph on Jews in European literature. In the present volume, the theme of Judaism is taken up by the three essays mentioned above, by two dealing with Eichner's semi-autobiographical novel, and by several on Jewish authors and themes.

The shape and order of the present volume reflect Hans Eichner's legacy in broader than just scholarly terms, and to some extent mirror the trajectory of his career as scholar, teacher, and creative writer. The first cluster of essays concerns itself directly with Eichner as scholar: first as scholar of Friedrich Schlegel, then via a broader retrospective that places his work in the context of trends in *Germanistik*, or collects and reflects on memorable moments in it and their significance. A second, larger cluster is comprised of scholarly essays inspired by Eichner's

work or reflecting similar subjects and concerns. These are arranged chronologically according to the authors they treat and mirror the broad spectrum of Eichner's scholarly interests: Friedrich Schlegel, German Romanticism as a whole, Thomas Mann, Jewish themes and authors. At the same time, some essays in this group also pay tribute to Hans Eichner the teacher: they are written by his students – one essay reflects directly on his pedagogy – or carry forward his methodology. The final cluster is devoted to Hans Eichner the creative, Jewish writer. This is a late phase of his career and the most personal. Two essays deal with his novel *Kahn & Engelmann*, and the final contribution to the volume provides a historical context in which to view this dimension of Eichner's work and identity.

A brief overview of the essays reveals a web of commonalities and interconnections. The first three studies offer a retrospective on the impact and significance of Hans Eichner the scholar, especially, but not only, of Romanticism. Theodore Ziolkowski concentrates on Eichner's legacy as a Schlegel scholar: he points out Eichner's affinity to Friedrich Schlegel, discusses his extensive work as editor and interpreter, assesses the impact of his scholarship on Schlegel, and draws particular attention to the monograph written for the Twayne series as a seminal sustained study on this author. Willi Goetschel does the same thing from a different perspective: he explores some of the motives underlying Eichner's scholarship, and places it in the context of trends in twentieth-century *Germanistik* and its relation to contemporary politics. He devotes particular attention to the place of Jewish scholars and the special problems they faced. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz's essay, the last of this cluster, takes a "great moments" approach to a retrospective on Eichner's scholarship: using memorable formulations as red thread, she creates a picture of major themes in his critical work, and seeks to highlight its relevance to today in human and moral as well as intellectual terms. This approach draws attention to the style – elegant, witty, and vivid – as well as the content of his writings.

The next eight essays are more or less directly inspired by Hans Eichner's scholarship. They explore questions which he also dealt with, and build further on the results of his explorations. Eberhard Lämmert analyses Friedrich Schlegel's novel *Lucinde* in the context of its author's theory of the novel as "progressive Universalpoesie" and argues that, viewed from this perspective, *Lucinde* stands its prototype, Goethe's