



RICHARD HERBERT SAMUEL

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1900-1983

With the death of Richard Samuel Australian German studies lost its oldest and in many ways most distinguished figure. Born on 23 March 1900, Richard was Professor of German at the University of Melbourne from 1951 to 1967 and a Corresponding Member of the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung in Darmstadt. Despite opportunities to return to Germany and Britain, he preferred to remain in Australia. He had studied in Münster, Tübingen and Berlin, where he graduated in 1925, and his first major published work was his doctoral thesis on Novalis, followed by significant editorial work with Paul Kluckhohn on the 1929 Novalis edition. Obligated to leave Germany in 1934, he continued his studies in Cambridge, obtaining a doctorate for his still widely quoted thesis on Heinrich von Kleist in 1938. During the war he was in the British Army for five years, working with British Intelligence, and returned to Germany with the Occupation Forces in 1945. His time in England was marked by a close and fruitful collaboration with R. Hinton Thomas, resulting in a study of Expressionism and a history of education in Germany. Richard married his wife Helen in 1939 and she was his constant companion on the travels he enjoyed right up to his death (on 28 October 1983).

Richard was an eminently humane scholar with a vast store of knowledge and an unflinching determination to place literature in its social and historical context. He seemed to have remembered every fact about literature he had ever learned and one could profit endlessly from conversations with him on any number of areas of German literature and history. I was fortunate to be invited to stay with Richard and Helen on many occasions over the last twelve or thirteen years and it was always a delight to listen to Richard on the topics he knew and loved so well. His commitment to scholarship and academic values was total, but such was the charm of his personality that it always came through gently. One of his last tasks for the Academy was to be a member of the Working Party to prepare our submission on a National Languages Policy and he addressed this task with an incisiveness and vigour which would have been impressive in someone forty years his junior.

His enthusiasm for research remained undiminished right to the end, and one may say truly that he enjoyed a blessed old age. In collaboration with Hilda Brown of Oxford University he published in 1982 a volume on some of the puzzles in Kleist's biography, and his last published essay on the same author's *Robert Guiskard* will remain one of the best essays on the play, not least because he was able to refute convincingly some of the most recently published opinion. At the time of his death he left an essay on Kleist and Wieland incomplete

and was engaged in editing a volume of essays on literary 'Jugendstil' for the *Jahrbuch der Internationalen Germanistik*. He remained in active correspondence with German scholars all over the world, but could always find time to examine theses and help younger scholars with their research.

His major scholarly monument is undoubtedly the great edition of Novalis on which he collaborated for many years with Hans-Joachim Mähl and Gerhard Schulz. But he was also an indefatigable reviewer, and many valuable insights are to be gleaned from his long and painstaking reviews, particularly of Kleist literature. Richard stood for a brand of scholarship that preserved the best of the German positivist tradition while remaining open to new interpretative approaches and tolerating anyone's ideas so long as they were in conflict neither with the facts nor good sense. In this way, Richard experienced no generation gap in his scholarly dialogues, and always remained sensitive to the possibilities of innovation.

His obituary for Ralph Farrell is eloquent testimony of their long and close association which did so much to determine the shape of Australian German studies in the fifties and sixties, when existing departments expanded and several new ones were created. Richard's friends and many of his pupils are to be found in virtually all Australian and New Zealand German Departments. But he enjoyed close contact with many friends and colleagues outside the German sphere and it is not only for his scholarship that he will be remembered always with affection and admiration.

A. R. Stephens