

Anja Müller, Achim Hesch, Anke Uebel (Eds.)

Representing Restoration, Enlightenment and Romanticism

Studies in New-Eighteenth-Century Literature and Film  
in Honour of Hans-Peter Wagner



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For the realization of the book, the editors also want to thank those who contributed, each in their own way, to the completion of the volume. Thanks are due first and foremost to the contributors, who enthusiastically joined the endeavour and delved into the field of new-eighteenth-century literature and film. We also wish to thank all those colleagues and friends of Peter's whose entry on the *Tabula Gratulatoria* helped to tackle the financial demands of the publication. Special thanks in this respect go to Faculty 6 of the University of Koblenz-Landau, Landau Campus, notably to Dean Siegmar Schmidt, who generously gave financial support for the realization of this book project. For her diligence and untiring assistance with the hard work of finalizing and formatting the manuscript, we owe thanks to Maria Severin. Finally, we wish to thank the Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier and the always reliable and supportive Erwin Otto, the long-standing publisher of several of Peter's books, who was immediately willing to back up this project and guaranteed publication in time.





## **Peter Wagner – Appreciating a Scholar, Colleague and Friend**

**Martin Pütz**

I was delighted by the Festschrift editors' invitation to write a Preface to appreciate Professor Dr. Dr. Peter Wagner both as a scholar and a colleague and, I might add, above all as a friend. Being a linguist rather than a literary scholar, I gladly leave it to others in this volume to make reference to Peter's enormous publication output and scholarly work in English and American literature and literary theory. The increase in productivity is all the more surprising because, for the past six years, he acted as Dean of the Faculty of Cultural and Social Sciences (2008-2011) of the University of Koblenz-Landau and as Chair of the English Department (2013-2014). Throughout the academic sphere, nationally and internationally, there are literary scholars who have been influenced by the teaching, research, and writings of Peter Wagner. Many have worked with him personally, and among the contributors to this Festschrift are colleagues with whom he has had special links or those whose involvement represents an appreciation of the breadth of Peter's interests.

Before delivering a short narrative of my experiences with Peter as a colleague and friend, let me briefly focus on his remarkable academic career. My personal acquaintance with Peter goes back some fifteen years when he was chairperson on the board committee of the newly reassigned professorship in linguistics which I was lucky enough to obtain (1998). Ever since then, Peter and I have not only enjoyed working together in the academic and administrative field, but as time passed by we also got to know each other better on a more informal and personal level.

In 1973, Peter Wagner obtained his First State Exam at the University of the Saarland (Saarbrücken, Germany) in English studies, pedagogy, philosophy and sports and was then awarded a grant to embark upon a PhD thesis entitled "Puritan Attitudes Towards Recreation in Early Seventeenth-Century New England" (Wagner 1982). He received his first doctorate in 1978. "First" already hints at the fact that there was still more to come... In the meantime, from 1973-1975, he spent time as a researcher at the College of William & Mary, a public research university located in Williamsburg, Virginia (USA). Peter then also discovered his pedagogical talent and didactic abilities and soon decided to become an educator, first as a trainee and then as teacher at a German Gymnasium (secondary level) in Saarbrücken (1975-76) and Lower Saxony (1977). At the end of his time as a trainee, Peter took his Second State Examination to qualify for state employment as a teacher (1977).

In 1978, after this short intermezzo with the school sector, Peter Wagner received his PhD in American Studies at the University of the Saarland. From 1978-1980 he was a DAAD lecturer at the University of Bath (UK) and subsequently in 1980-81 he

accepted a teaching post (DAAD) at the University of Aston in Birmingham (UK). These periods abroad can be regarded as the beginnings of Peter's academic ambitions to see and appreciate the linguistic, literary and cultural world and to engage in teaching practices from an intercultural perspective.

Then, for a period of twelve rewarding years (from 1981-1993), Peter taught British and American literature at the Bavarian University of Eichstätt as *Studienrat im Hochschuldienst*, *Oberstudienrat* and *Studiendirektor*. However, Peter was not only heavily involved in the teaching sector, but during his university employment he was also keen on researching a hitherto unknown literary topic, i.e. the "Erotica of the Enlightenment", with such ambitions and success that in 1986 he received his second PhD from the Université de Paris-Sorbonne (Doctorat de l'université de la Sorbonne), one of the first significant colleges of the medieval University of Paris. Peter submitted a dissertation entitled "Eros Revived. Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America 1700-1800", which was to be published soon thereafter (Wagner 1988). The fact that Peter found himself not with one but two PhD degrees should in itself count as an obvious sign of intellectual excellence and ambition. Peter must have seriously distinguished himself among his peers. This academic debut is also characterized by Peter's polyglottism, a crucial ingredient found throughout his career. He started life speaking German (subsequently the dialects of Bavaria, the Saarland and the Palatinate), then specialized in English at university, had learned French beforehand at school, and interacted (and still interacts) in French with his family members (especially when vacationing in Brittany, their second home). In his subsequent life as an academic, Peter's fluency in both French and English has given him a distinct advantage over his Anglophone colleagues. After his second doctorate, Peter immediately pursued a *Habilitation* by submitting his postdoctoral thesis to the Paris-Sorbonne University. In 1987, he received his *venia legendi* for English Philology. This award of the French (or the German) *Habilitation* is a strict requirement for applying for tenure track positions. Peter was now ready to take on professorships and academic posts throughout the world and was eligible for a call to a chair of any Department of English or American Studies.

Accordingly, in 1991-92, Peter took on a position as a substitute professor for English Literature at the University of Siegen in Germany. Shortly beforehand, he had already been offered a professorship (Professeur de Littérature anglaise) at the Université de la Réunion (1990), which, however, he declined. In 1993, finally (and luckily, I might add), Peter accepted a position as Full Professor of English and American Literature at the University of Koblenz-Landau (Campus Landau), which was a lifetime appointment until his retirement in 2014. The challenge of developing literary study programmes at one of the youngest universities in Germany (founded in 1990) in cooperation with colleagues even made him turn down attractive professorships at the universities of Dortmund (1993), Metz (1996) and later on, Flensburg (2001), the northernmost university in Germany near the Baltic sea. As Peter later told me, he would have loved to have gone sailing there but decided to stay connected with the

Southern Wine Route close to the Palatinate forest and the sun-kissed city of Landau, sometimes also known as Germany's Tuscany...

The small, but lovely and historic city of Landau (close to Frankfurt airport and the French border; both major advantages to Peter's well-being), surrounded by extensive vineyards, was to become Peter's number one academic location. In 1995, Peter was appointed "Distinguished Visiting Professor of English Literature", an honorary position which he adopted at Dartmouth College (New Hampshire, USA) in the spring of 1998. Landau was the place where Peter enjoyed teaching and researching, even if it was some distance away from his family and his home, the Saarland. Peter's office happened to be situated in a building called the Red Barracks (*Rote Kaserne*, built in the seventeenth century), the birthplace of Thomas Nast (1840-1905), who is said to be the father of American political cartoons. By the way, one of Peter's last activities before his retirement in 2014 was to initiate a professorship devoted to Landau's most famous son, Thomas Nast, and to nominate a good colleague and friend of his, the President of Pitzer College (Claremont, USA), Professor Laura Trombley, for this newly introduced Thomas Nast Professorship.

During his career, Peter was invited as a speaker to many conferences and guest lectureships around the world, be it in Hong Kong, London, Botswana, Japan, New Zealand, or his favourite academic location, Pitzer College in Claremont, California (where he was certainly also able to indulge in one of his major passions, surfing in the Pacific Ocean). Needless to say, Peter also took up a number of administrative and departmental positions which he always performed with great meticulousness and enthusiasm. At Landau University he held the Chair of the English Department for several periods (lastly in the winter semester of 2013-14 until his retirement). Oftentimes he served as an elective member of the Faculty of Cultural and Social Sciences and from 2008-2011 he acted as Dean of the Faculty. Taking responsibility for academic recruitment, Peter was nominated several times as the chairperson of appointment committees, be it in the Department of Theology, of Arts, of Germanic or Romance studies, or of the English Department itself.

The university also provided the institutionalized forum which allowed Peter Wagner (in cooperation with his French colleague, Professor Frédéric Ogée) to organize an impressive series of international literary symposia, in particular the LAPASEC (Landau-Paris Symposia on the Eighteenth Century) conferences which became known throughout the literary world. The world's most distinguished scholars were invited to present their views at the small university located in the historic city of Landau in the Palatinate. Most of the proceedings of the conferences were edited by Peter Wagner and his associates. The diversity of literary topics addressed in these conferences reflected Peter's broad range in literary studies, with a focus on the eighteenth century, and his openness to other people's approaches and fields of research.

Peter has acted as an internal examiner for various types of degrees (e.g. First State Exam, Master of Arts, the newly introduced Bachelor and Master's degrees, PhD), and as an external examiner for many institutions within Germany and abroad.

He has always been personally involved in supporting students and young scholars during the various stages of their careers. Moreover, he has been an expert referee for the field of English literature in many journals, associations, and institutions worldwide.

What is most impressive about Peter's general concern with students is that on the one hand, he has always demanded a high degree of academic excellence; on the other hand, he generously gave students a feeling of being in good hands and he would constantly take the time to supervise their work or to listen to their requests and complaints. And he was always quick to respond by emailing them within 24 hours (sometimes he wished administrative bodies would have behaved in similar ways...). During his career of more than 20 years at Landau University (1993-2014), Peter conducted close to one thousand oral exams in addition to dealing with an equally large number of written exams and term papers. Acting on the same examining board, the two of us learnt quite a number of literary and linguistic findings from each other, so that Peter is now an expert on Labovian sociolinguistics and my humble self is finally in a position to recite some of the poems by William Wordsworth (my favourite piece being "I wandered lonely as a cloud").

To secure a decent education as future language teachers, it has always been a major concern for Peter to acquaint students with the English language and culture in many parts of the world. Thus, he can be credited with initiating and signing quite a number of exchange programmes with universities all over Europe and the US, such as Coe College, Pitzer College, Claremont Graduate University, Northumbria University, Université Laval, Hobart & William Smith Colleges and the University of South Carolina Upstate. It is one of Peter Wagner's great merits that our students had these unique opportunities to enjoy some different cultural and academic atmospheres over a period of a semester or two. Likewise, Landau University, the English Department, and Peter in particular, were hosts of a remarkable number of exchange students from four continents who were always guided with great care and enthusiasm by Peter and his colleagues.

Peter is also an excellent imitator of linguistic varieties of English. Sometimes he would give some speech samples, and perhaps was at his best when performing an Irish or RP accent, or what was his preferred tongue, the Scottish voice of former Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson. And that brings me to one of the main passions in Peter's sporting life which we both shared to a great extent and with much enthusiasm. Peter is not only well known amongst his neighbours for running miles and miles in the woods close to his home in Saarbrücken; he is also fascinated with the game of football, at times even from a sociological and psychological perspective. Indeed, Peter sometimes enjoyed making an academic subject out of the game when he talked about the synchronic behaviour of football fans and their underlying psychologically and sociologically motivated behaviours. I will certainly miss the many times on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening when after work we met at my place to watch international football matches... FC Barcelona, Manchester United, Olympique Lyon,

or just recently, Bayern Munich vs. Dortmund in the European Championship final (2013)... and we were behaving certainly not as a bunch of disordered maniacs exchanging ritual insults and using abusive vocabulary, but simply enjoying our time together with fascinating (admittedly, at times somewhat boring) games. And in-between exciting scenes of the match we would discuss things that (we felt) mattered in relation to the university, colleagues and students... certainly never without a few glasses of some Riesling of the South Palatinate region or some French Burgundy (considering France as his second home, Peter usually preferred the latter...).

Peter is not only considered to be a bilingual speaker, but even trilingual given his excellent native-like command of French. No wonder, thanks to his wife Odile, who is a native of the Côtes d'Armor in Brittany and an excellent speaker of the Celtic language of Breton, Peter got acquainted at a young age with the French customs and behaviours and with the cultural ingredients of Brittany in particular. And in the restaurants of Lannion, Trégastel and Ploumanac'h, the Wagners would acquaint us with the excellent Breton cuisine, not only by way of *gallettes* and cider, but certainly also by way of fresh seafood and fish, especially mussels and oysters, and including a few glasses of French Mouscadet. My wife Natascha and I really treasured the very warm welcome the Wagners gave us at their second home in Lannion (Brittany) on the occasion of our two visits there.

There is no doubt that appreciating Peter's scholarly achievements is inseparably linked to Peter's and his family's hospitality, to his sense of humour, to his idealism and optimism, to his European and worldwide visions, and to his second home, Brittany. Always charming and modest in manner, his initiatives, absolute reliability and willingness to help those around him and far away endeared him to his many friends, colleagues and academics in the private and academic world.

Therefore, let me close this Preface by mentioning the fact that despite Peter's admirable and time-consuming literary work during his career, he has always considered his wife Odile, his two daughters Marie-Laure and Anne, his son Roland, as well as his grandchildren Ronan and Leonore to be his number one priority... and this will certainly continue to be the case for many years to come.

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