

Reminiscences about Ernst H. Kantorowicz

Prologue

“Eka” was Ernst H. Kantorowicz’s nickname¹, and “Ekaica” the witty term used by his niece, Beate R. Salz, to describe the family papers that she inherited when he died. Added to that over time was the correspondence that accumulated in the exercise of literary rights relating to the reprinting and translation of his works. I had my own collection of Ekaica, consisting of the scholarly papers he had bequeathed to me, which were ultimately deposited in the Leo Baeck Institute in New York City, where Beate also put the family papers.

These reminiscences have their remote origin in the early 1980s, when Beate and I began to make lists of factual errors we found in obituaries and articles written about Eka after his demise. In the later 1980s, then, there began the phenomenon which Beate promptly labeled “Ekamania”: translation of *The King’s Two Bodies* into five languages; collections of Eka’s articles published in three languages: and several symposia devoted to his life and works. Complementing these were a spate of biographical writings, some of them filled with foolish, if not mendacious, remarks about Eka’s character, teachings and personal beliefs. These demanded a vigorous rebuttal, and that led soon enough to the positive portrayal of Eka’s character given in these Reminiscences.

Beate and I met several times during the 1980s and ‘90s, but I was so committed to finishing work in my own field that I little time for “Ekaica.” Beate’s health then declined in the early 2000s, and she died in the spring of 2006. She was a dear, dear person, and I dedicate to her these *Reminiscences* of her uncle.

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Drafts of the first three chapters of these reminiscences—my personal relationship to Eka; the Berkeley years; the Princeton years—were written before I discovered a long-forgotten folder that contained dozens of letters that Eka had once written to me. The whole lot (nearly 60) of them has been put in digital form and posted in the section “Letters: Eka to REG”. When things

¹ Writing in German, he simply used as signature his initials, ‘EK’, and in English he kept both initials capitalized but added an ‘a’, evidently to have the letter ‘K’ be pronounced in a German fashion. He himself always signed correspondence ‘EKa.’, but among Americans the ‘K’ shrank into lower case and the initials turned into a veritable nickname, ‘Eka’, which I have used throughout.

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said in those letters enhance matters written about in the Reminiscences, I have hyperlinked them one to the other. Allow me to suggest, however, that readers who have no particular interest in Eka's relationship with me but do put great value upon the evidence of a person's character and values that pervades correspondence with close friends, will likely be better served by going directly to Eka's letters—not only those to me but also the ones gathered under the heading “to various others”—rather than waiting for random samples of them to be cited in the reminiscences.

Chapter I of this essay is essentially autobiographical, recounting the stages of development of my personal relationship with Eka during the sixteen and one-half years I knew him. Chapters II and III are biographical, done mostly in anecdotal fashion; each of them spans a dozen years when Eka was a Professor, first at the University of California in Berkeley and then at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Chapter IV (denominated “Ekamania” as mentioned above) deals with the flowering of Eka's fame posthumously, a process in which I have regularly participated. Chapter V sets down my opinion of Eka's values and beliefs. In doing this I cannot escape reference to specific elements of his written work, but on the whole I have steered clear of professional debate over the importance of Eka's work. As is well known, both his major works, *Emperor Frederick II* and *The King's Two Bodies* (each still selling well, 82 and 52 years on respectively), have had exciting careers.

These Reminiscences are a work-in-progress, being posted piece by piece starting in November, 2009. Every chapter is prone to change. New material will be not only added onto but also inserted into existing text, so that the page locations of specific items will change over time. To impart these Reminiscences with location numbers that do not change, I have foregone all pagination in favor of dividing the text the of every chapter into section symbols—§1, §2, §3, etc. Although any or all of these sections is prone to grow longer by the addition of new text over time, nothing in a given text will be moved to a different section. All additions and corrections that are made will be listed under the heading *Addenda et Corrigenda* at the end of each chapter.