

**Peter Allan Hansen**  
**(20.4.1944-18.4.2012)**

The death of Peter Allan Hansen marked the end of a long period of suffering. Some twenty years ago he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis that gradually paralysed him. He had no illusions about the prognosis, but sometimes joked about wanting «to meet his maker and give him a good kick where it hurts». But as a non-believer he knew that even this would be denied him. We once discussed these matters in a correspondence where he wrote that of course he did not believe, but he also found it difficult to explain how the world had come to be. «It is like thinking that a bomb-explosion in a print-shop could result in an encyclopaedia», as he expressed it.

His background was modest and quite un-academic, but because of his exceptional intelligence he was sent to high school in Copenhagen and opted for classical languages. Even if you were a year older, you noticed him, for he cut a rather odd figure, but he got highest marks in everything.

After school he started Classical Philology in the University of Copenhagen, but after some years he took time off and went to Oxford for a couple of years in order to do a diploma in classical archaeology with Lilian Jeffery. This became a decisive factor in his life. When he came back to Denmark, bringing his wife Estella with him, he had become an epigraphist and also a staunch Anglophile.

He became a *magister artium* in Copenhagen in 1970, got a temporary part-time post as lecturer in Greek epigraphy, then a junior research scholarship, and finally, in 1974, he applied for a permanent post in the University of Copenhagen. Although he was placed at the top of the short-list he did not get this post, which so embittered him that he decided to leave Denmark forever. He had obtained a three-year scholarship from the Danish Research Council in Humanities and went with family and children to Oxford. He was then a doctoral student at Brasenose College and was installed in a house belonging to the college. Brasenose, however, wanted to sell this house, and he brought to bear the statutory first refusal of sitting tenants and managed to buy it with the money he had. Ever since he had part of his livelihood as a landlord renting rooms to foreign students.

In 1980 he became a D.Phil. (Oxon.). During the 1980s and '90s he received occasional scholarships from the Danish Research Council, the Carlsberg Foundation and finally from the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung (Cologne), first to complete his *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* I–II, later in order to finish Kurt Latte's edition of Hesychius. Of this work he managed to bring volume three to completion in spite

of his ever declining health. Volume four, on which he had done much work, he had to abandon, but when I saw him the last time, in November 2010, one of the things he insisted on was that I be shown volume four. He was clearly very happy to be mentioned as a co-author of this volume.

On this occasion he was bedridden, could hardly move or speak, and I think we both knew that we should not meet again. He appeared serene and glad to have achieved what he had achieved without compromising.

Peter Allan Hansen leaves a widow, Estella, and two sons.

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### *Addendum*

I became acquainted with Peter Allan Hansen in the latter part of his life, when he was working on Hesychius and I on the *Συναγωγή λέξεων χρησίμων*: both involved the unpublished lexicon of Cyril and we had mutually beneficial discussions concerning it. Editing Hesychius is an unhealthy occupation: only M. Musurus and M. Schmidt have survived it; C. Schrevel, J. Alberti, K. Latte and Hansen died with their work unfinished. Latte famously said in his preface «ad Hesychium edendum non sponte accessi», and Peter might well have echoed that; however he diligently mastered a new area, and brought to it the highest standard of scholarship. I counted it an honour to be asked to take up and complete volume IV of the edition.

Visiting Peter in his North Oxford study was a remarkable experience. Books lined the walls, filled bookcases, stood on the floor and any other available surface, including chairs, one of which had to be cleared for the visitor. A narrow gap led to a small space in the centre, which accommodated Peter's chair (latterly wheelchair) and desk with computer and the books currently in use. Hospitality, in the shape of coffee, beer or whisky, was instantly provided by Estella, and the latest problems or discoveries were presented acutely.

The loss caused by his illness and death is great. The contribution of Estella in making it possible for him to continue working as long as he did, cannot be praised too highly.

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### *Abstract*

Obituary of P.A. Hansen.