

PREFACE

The publication of this modified version of my Cambridge PhD dissertation, *Gerhard Roth and the Graz Literary Revival: the Emergence of an Austrian Author* (1990), has been prompted by a noticeable gap in the academic studies of Roth's work which have appeared so far in print or as unpublished graduate dissertations in German, Austrian or English-speaking universities. In addition to a large number of essays and articles, three book-length studies, three volumes containing critical essays, interviews, commentaries and other material, and a stand-alone bibliography have since been published. In the order of their publication, these are:

Peter Ensberg and Helga Schreckenberger, *Gerhard Roth. Kunst als Auflehnung gegen das Sein* (Tübingen: Stauffenberg) 1994;

Wolfgang Tietze, *Das mikroskopische Gedankenglas. Mythen und Techniken der Autorschaft – Ein Kommentar zum Werk Gerhard Roths* (München: Fink) 1995;

Uwe Schütte, *Auf der Spur des Vergessenen. Gerhard Roth und seine Archive des Schweigens* (Wien/Köln: Böhlau) 1997.

Uwe Wittstock (Hg.), *Gerhard Roth. Materialien zu 'Die Archive des Schweigens'* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer) 1992;

Marianne Baltl and Christian Ehretreiber (Hg.), *Dossier 9: Gerhard Roth* (Graz: Droschl) 1995;

Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Hg.), *Gerhard Roth. Text + Kritik*, H. 128 (München) 1995.

Simon Ryan, *Gerhard Roth. Eine Bibliographie. Werke und Rezeption 1966-1994*. (Dunedin: University of Otago, Department of German) 1995 (= Otago German Studies 8).

Uwe Schütte's analysis of *Die Archive des Schweigens* provides qualitatively the best and most extensive published account of the relationship between Roth's mature work (*Die Archive des Schweigens*) and its Austrian and European cultural, political and philosophical-critical setting. The foundation on which Roth's later work builds - the nature of the Graz literary revival itself, its aesthetic and cultural-political basis, together with Roth's emergence from it and rise to prominence in the mid-1970s to become one of the leading Austrian writers of the first post-war generation - has been largely overlooked in other published studies of his work. It is this field which the present publication seeks to elucidate.

The importance of the contribution made by Austrian authors to the overall development of German literature since the late 1960s has been attested to by all who have concerned themselves with the subject. The nature and extent of the Austrian contribution has been under investigation on a number of fronts. An initial interest in the work of Peter Handke and Gerhard Roth led me in the late 1970s to confront the literary-historical phenomenon of 'Grazer Literatur' and to discover that relatively little research had been carried out into the complex knot of Austrian and West German literary history from which it arose. In the course of investigations for an M.A. thesis into the image of America and the use made of conventions from urban American detective fiction in novels by Handke and Roth, the significance of literary events occurring in Graz from the founding of the artists' association 'Forum Stadtpark' in 1960 first impressed itself on me. Preliminary research for the Cambridge PhD dissertation presented here in a modified form commenced in Tübingen in 1980. The original 'Dissertationsplan', prepared for Professor Wilfried Barner, focussed exclusively on Roth's emergence as a leading representative of the Austrian literary circle identified loosely by reviewers and critics as the 'Grazer Gruppe'. It was intended to encompass all of Roth's narrative works from the 'Kurzroman' *die autobiographie des albert einstein* (1972) to the first novel of *Die Archive des Schweigens, Der stille Ozean* (1980). Gerhard Roth invited me to visit him in Graz in October 1980. An extensive interview was recorded over three days in his apartment on the Geidorfgürtel in Graz and at his house in Obergreith near St. Ulrich in the south west of Styria. Contact was also made with the editor of *manuskripte*, Alfred Kolleritsch, and with the Graz dramatist, Wolfgang Bauer. The interview material from this first meeting with Roth and from a subsequent period of research in Graz in 1982 assisted me greatly in establishing an Austrian perspective on the Graz phenomenon. The structure of the proposed dissertation was altered in 1981 when I transferred to the University of Cambridge and came under the supervision of Dr Edward Timms of Gonville and Caius College. It soon became apparent that a number of questions about the nature of the 'Grazer Gruppe' and the associated concept of 'Grazer Literatur' needed to be addressed before Roth's position in relation to the group and to the idea of a new Austrian literature could be examined.

The first section of the dissertation begins by reconstructing the climate of critical reception in which the idea of Graz as the centre of a new Austrian literature first emerged. The received idea of the 'Grazer Gruppe' is examined in the light of actual events in Graz and the authors' own perception of the group and its function. A definition of the group and its historical limits is proposed which clarifies the literary-historical reference value of the label 'participant in the *Grazer Gruppe*'. The emphasis then shifts to the problem of defining the distinguishing characteristics of 'Grazer Literatur' with the aim of

delineating the aesthetic basis for a historically discrete 'literature of Graz'. This opening section includes a review of critical perspectives on the nature of the group and its literary productions. The second section proceeds from the discussion of literary-historical and aesthetic issues pertinent to the 'Grazer Gruppe' as a whole, to examine the emergence of Gerhard Roth as a leading representative of the Graz circle. Roth's literary development is analysed from 1966 to 1978 in terms of the critical argument advanced in the preceding section. The significance of Roth's involvement with the literary activities of the group for the establishment of his own literary career is demonstrated. Analyses of individual works trace the growth of the techniques and thematic concerns which characterise Roth's distinctive literary strategy. At the same time, comparisons are made with the work of other Graz authors and attention is drawn to those features of Roth's literary production which exemplify the approach of 'Grazer Literatur'. The alteration of the original scheme to include the opening historical framework in the dissertation meant that considerations of length precluded a detailed examination of Roth's work as a dramatist. The early experimental play *Lichtenberg* is, however, included. *Sehnsucht* and *Dämmerung*, which deserve full discussion in the context of Roth's interest in writing for the theatre, have been omitted. For the same reason, the detailed analysis of the novel *Der stille Ozean* in the context of the Austrian 'Anti-Heimatliteratur' of the 1970s with which it was planned to conclude the dissertation, had to await the later studies by Ensberg, Schreckenberger and Schütte. A section dealing with the novel *Ein neuer Morgen* (1976) which the Cambridge degree regulations precluded because it contained some previously examined material, has been reinstated here. The appended bibliography represented the first attempt to provide a scholarly bibliography of Roth's work and its reception and was intended to reveal the wide range of the author's literary and journalistic activities. It has since been replaced by my expanded one-volume bibliography, by the FWF bibliographic project of the *Franz Nabl Institut für Literaturforschung* of the University of Graz (1993-), by Schütte's bibliography in *Gerhard Roth: Text + Kritik*, H. 128 (1995) and by my updated *KLK Verzeichnis der Werke und Sekundärliteratur*, 43. Nlg. (1999) but still provides a useful complement to this account of Roth's early work. The present study can only hope to provide a clear outline of the development of Roth's major concerns up to 1978 and the publication of *Winterreise*, the novel which finally established his reputation as a major contemporary Austrian author. Roth's subsequent achievements, including the award of the Alfred-Döblin prize (1983), the Würdigungspreis des Österreichischen Bundesministeriums für Unterricht und Kunst (1990), the Marie-Luise-Kaschnitz prize (1992), the Preis der Literaturzeitschrift *manuskripte* (1992), the Literaturpreis der Stadt Wien (1993), the Peter-Rosegger prize (1994), and the publication of the

complete *Archive des Schweigens* (1980-1991) have confirmed that he is, indeed, an author of considerable note.

Note on Source Material and Bibliography

The two interviews I conducted with Gerhard Roth are quoted extensively for their ability to provide a first-hand account of literary events in Austria, as well as of Roth's own development as an author. The interviews were recorded some two years apart: Interview 1 between 17 and 19 October 1980 and Interview 2 on 11 November 1982. In a number of instances, Roth's observations serve as a corrective to views expressed by critics working at one or more steps removed from the source. His comments are generally well-informed and balanced. A glance at some of the articles written for *Die Zeit*, for example, will reveal Roth as an acute observer of Austrian culture and politics. All transcriptions are my own. The Roth Bibliography 1966-1983 is the result of research carried out jointly by myself and Dr Friedrich Voit of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literature, University of Auckland, New Zealand. The work on this section of the bibliography was carried out between 1980 and 1983. The project was first initiated when Dr Voit was contracted to write an article on Roth's work for the *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Dr Voit prepared a short, selected 'Werkverzeichnis' for this publication from materials forwarded to him by Roth and his publishers. When I took up a postgraduate scholarship in Tübingen in 1980, we decided to work together to produce a complete Roth bibliography. The existing data was far from comprehensive and many items needed to be checked at source. I took over the gathering, checking, and collating of data and carried out the field work necessary to complete the bibliography up to 1983. Roth himself provided further information and the remaining entries were established by collating material from the 'Stadtbücherei' in Dortmund and the 'Dokumentationsstelle' in Vienna, in addition to what could be gathered directly from the press and other media. I later created a computer database for the bibliography and published the expanded version in 1995. Many of the source items for the bibliography are derived from clipping services such as 'Der Ausschnitt', Berlin. Although all such items are dated, the page numbers of newspaper articles are rarely recorded by the clipping agencies and are not normally included in German bibliographies. For this reason, the bibliography only includes the pages numbers of longer items published in books, magazines and journals. The main body of this dissertation is entirely the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. The Roth Bibliography presented in the Appendix as a supplement to the dissertation is the result of the joint research project outlined in the preceding

paragraph. The bibliography appears with the express permission of Dr Friedrich Voit. Copyright of the bibliography is retained jointly by myself and Dr Voit.

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To Gerhard Roth himself I owe a remarkable debt of gratitude. The hospitality with which he first received me as a somewhat nervous research student in Graz, the openness with which he responded to my innumerable questions and the depth and precision of the answers he gave, went beyond my most optimistic imaginings of that encounter. In a few days, he taught me more about the making of literature than I had learned in many years of university study. Each visit with him opened a new window in my research. He provided me freely with original materials, first editions and documents, introduced me to Alfred Kolleritsch, Wolfgang Bauer and others of the Graz circle, as well as to friends and acquaintances in Obergreith, the real-life counterparts of some of the characters who appear in *Der stille Ozean* and later works. He put up none of the conventional barriers between the public and personal spheres of his life and admitted me equally to both. The essential difference between the creative writer and his critics remains indelibly impressed on my mind. Such meetings are rare in a lifetime.

Others to whom thanks are due include Dr Roger Paulin of Trinity College who first received me in Cambridge and helped to arrange my studies there; my contemporaries of the Cambridge German Graduate Seminars who all encouraged me in various ways; the staff of the Department of Germanic

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