

ORIGINS OF THE GRAZ LITERARY PHENOMENON

1.0 INTRODUCTION: LITERARY - HISTORICAL ISSUES IN GRAZ

The appearance on the literary horizon of a body of literature which is genuinely new asserts and demands of its readers a new type of aesthetic competence. The knowledge, attitudes, and skills which permitted an adequate reading of works written in the tradition with which the new literature takes issue do not facilitate an adequate reading of the new works. The task of analysing the logical structure of this aesthetic competence belongs to the aesthetician. The task of the literary historian is to elucidate the historical situation in which this shift in aesthetic consciousness occurred. As acts of communication, literary works arise at the interface between the public and private spheres. For this reason the history of literature cannot afford to remain confined only to documenting the expressive activities of authors, nor can it be reduced to an analysis of the phantom play of words in the 'discursive space' of an 'infinite intertextuality'¹ without obscuring the vital social functions of literature.

In order to delineate the historical domain of a particular aesthetic practice, the literary historian must in the first instance demonstrate the way in which the expressive activities of the authors concerned interact with other events in the surrounding social space to communicate the sense that a *substantially modified* way of seeing aspects of a shared experience has been arrived at. Whenever a shift takes place in the conventions of literary production which can be demonstrated to be a common and coherent link between the works of authors sharing the same cultural space, literary history demands a new definition of what constitutes the 'literariness' of this emergent body of work. Corresponding changes may also be observed in the functional relationship of the authors and their works to institutions and practices in the surrounding social sphere.

In the media-intensive second half of the twentieth century, the appearance of a 'new literature' tends to be accompanied by a vast body of secondary discourse reinforcing or disputing the claim of the new works to be an adequate literary response to the prevailing state of affairs. At the many levels of literary-critical discourse, publishers, reviewers, academics, commentators on the arts of all kinds, and, at an ever-decreasing temporal distance, literary and cultural historians, help to make public and historically concrete the notion that a distinctive new literature has emerged. And it is not only these repre-

¹Johnathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, (London, 1981), p. 102.

sentatives of the literary and cultural industry who contribute to this discourse - so important to the making and breaking of literary careers that the adjective 'secondary' seems inappropriate - but the authors themselves. In the search for their own literary identity as they assert what they believe to be the vital difference between their works and other competing literary traditions and tendencies, authors are bound to engage in a degree of self-advertisement. The realities of the marketing situation and of critical reception by the media are such, however, that the authors' own statements regarding their work, where they reach the reading public at all, often do so in a distorted and potentially misleading form.

Between the expressive literary activities conducted in Austria in the two decades following the establishment in 1960 of the Graz artists' association 'Forum Stadtpark' and its house publication, the literary magazine, *manuskripte*, and what has since been said and written about the 'Grazer', there exists a reciprocal and, at times, critically problematical relationship. What a Swiss literary critic referred to in 1976 as 'the inexplicable phenomenon of Graz',² proves on closer examination to be nothing more or less than the sum total of the literary effects generated on the one hand by the literary activities of the Graz authors and, on the other hand, the body of discursive language which has for a variety of reasons sought to determine the literary-historical position of 'Grazer Literatur'. The establishment of formal and informal associations between individual authors in Graz, the appearance of a magazine, book publications, readings, performances, participation in local, Austrian, and West German cultural politics constitute only one part of the historical explanation as to how 'Grazer Literatur', as an amalgam of events and ideas, came to make a substantial contribution to the recent development of Austrian and German literature.

In approaching the Graz literary phenomenon in general and then moving on to consider in detail Gerhard Roth's particular contribution to it, it is undoubtedly the case, as Schmidt-Dengler amongst others has stressed, that it was 'eine Fülle von Einzelleistungen, die diese Gesamtheit ergab'.³ However much they appear to dominate the foreground in histories of literature, movements, trends, schools, and groups, like other literary-historical categories, finally amount to what a few individuals have made of them. But before turning to examine Roth's literary development in relation to the remarkable series of events which contrary to all expectations has placed Graz in a prominent position on the map of German literary developments since 1960, it is nonetheless necessary to consider the events which first promoted public

²Aurel Schmidt, 'Das unerklärliche Phänomen Graz', *National Zeitung*, Basel, 6 Sept. 1976, p. 19.

³Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, *Eine Avantgarde aus Graz*, Klagenfurter Universitätsreden Nr. 10, (Klagenfurt, 1979), p. 7.

awareness that Graz was becoming an active centre for new departures in literature, especially in drama and the novel.

How did the name of the conservative Austrian city of Graz come to function in the 1970s as an index for a literature which in the jargon of popular reviews was hailed as 'modern ... jung, experimentell, avantgardistisch und progressiv'?⁴ What kind of literary group-formation does the term 'Grazer Gruppe' signify? What literary values were implied when West German critics identified yet another young Austrian author as one of the 'Grazer'? Only when the answers to these and related questions have been found, will it be practical to ask what it means to call Gerhard Roth an author 'aus dem Grazer Forum Stadtpark' and 'dem Kreis der Grazer Gruppe'.⁵ The answers will be sought in the first instance in the process of critical reception whereby the work of young Austrian authors who were at the centre of literary activities in Graz after 1960 began to be seen by literary historians already in the mid-1970s as the distinctive achievement of a 'profilierter Gruppe der um 1940 herum geborenen und in den sechziger Jahren zuerst hervorgetretenen österreichischen Schriftstellern'.⁶

⁴Ulrich Greiner, *Der Tod des Nachsommers: Aufsätze, Porträts, Kritiken zur österreichischen Gegenwartsliteratur*, (Munich, 1979), p. 201.

⁵Paul Krontorad, 'Prosa in Österreich seit 1945'. *Kindlers Literaturgeschichte der Gegenwart* (4 vols): *Die zeitgenössische Literatur Österreichs*, edited by Hilde Spiel, (Munich, 1976), pp. 131-292 (p. 274). Further references to this series take the form: *KLGG*, 'volume title'. See Key.

⁶Walter Weiss, 'Die Literatur der Gegenwart in Österreich', in *Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur: Ausgangspositionen und aktuelle Entwicklungen*, edited by Manfred Durzak, (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 602-619 (p. 610). Further references to this edition take the form *DG* (1981). See Key.

1.1 WEST GERMAN INFLUENCES ON THE PUBLICATION AND RECEPTION OF AUSTRIAN LITERATURE SINCE 1960

1.1.1 The Absence of a 'Kulturindustrie' in the Austrian Second Republic

A logical first step in investigating the cultural context of 'Grazer Literatur' is to establish the general conditions of its reception. One of the anomalies in the literary history of the Austrian Second Republic is that both the publication in book form and the essential critical reception of works produced by almost all younger Austrian authors, from Ingeborg Bachmann (b. 1926) during the 1950s to Josef Winkler (b. 1953) in the early 1980s, have taken place across the border in West Germany. This is a fact which an appeal to Austria's modest economic base - population around 7 million - and therefore limited book market cannot adequately explain. Against competition from West German publishers, who in many instances belong to such media-giants as Holtzbrink or Bertelsmann, Austrian publishers clearly could not expect a large share of the market. During the same period, however, German-speaking Swiss firms were successful in publishing the work of younger Swiss authors and marketing it in the Federal Republic and elsewhere.

The indifference and even contempt with which major, post-war Austrian authors have been treated by Austria's small and conservative publishing industry is not primarily economic in origin. It is symptomatic of an Austrian cultural malaise, the provincialism which was particularly rife in the early years of the Second Republic. This situation, frequently bemoaned by Austrian authors, has been only slightly improved since the late 1960s by the determined efforts of Salzburg's Residenz Verlag and other small presses like Graz's Droschl Verlag to publish works by contemporary Austrian authors. The vast majority, including authors who have had work published by Residenz Verlag, remain largely dependent on income from West Germany. Michael Scharang, an author closely associated with early literary developments in Graz, provides a representative view of this economic dependence on West Germany:

Seit vierzig Jahren, seit meiner Geburt, lebe ich in Österreich, seit zwanzig Jahren in Wien, davon fünfzehn Jahre als Schriftsteller. Während dieser Zeit bezog ich ein Zehntel meines Einkommens aus Österreich, den Rest aus Westdeutschland; einen Rest, der mehr war als die Butter aufs Brot, nämlich das Brot selbst. Demnach bin ich ein Gastarbeiter, der zwar sein Land nicht

verlassen mußte, der aber nichtdestoweniger im Ausland sein Geld verdiente, um im eigenen Land Leben zu können (m 76/1982, p. 3).⁷

In the Austrian Second Republic, there is a conspicuous absence of anything capable of matching the West German 'Kulturbetrieb', of which the 'Literaturbetrieb' forms an essential part. Austria has provided its authors with almost none of the opportunities afforded by the unique and not infrequently envied network of literary communications across the border. In West Germany the interests of highly professional publishers - always market-orientated but in some cases (Suhrkamp, Rowohlt) also at times courageously market-determining - combine with the varying critical talents of equally professional media commentators to bring new literary works to the attention of a much wider reading and theatre-going public than is available in Austria. Scharang's experience is representative when he notes that in the 1960s: 'Den Begriff Kulturindustrie kannte ich nur aus Westdeutschen Publikationen, mit dem Phänomen selbst hatte ich damals nur indirekte Erfahrungen als Konsument, direkte konnte ich damals in Österreich nicht haben. ... eine kritische Öffentlichkeit, die vermißte ich bei uns' (m 76/1982, p. 5).

It is not only in the matter of publishing that Austrian authors are dependent on their West German neighbours. The situation in the Austrian press with regard to serious literary debate leaves a great deal to be desired. The tabloid character of Austria's largest-selling daily newspapers like the Vienna-based 'Neue Kronen-Zeitung' and 'Kurier'⁸, and the highly conservative nature of the regional, local, and party-political newspapers together with Austria's single national daily 'Die Presse', produce a standard of literary-critical discussion which generally ranks well below that of the West German press. Prospects of a higher standard of independent literary debate in Austria are further hindered by the nation's high consumption of popular West German weekly and monthly magazines. Although Austria has its own weekly news magazine, *profil*, the West German publication, *Der Spiegel*, still enjoys a high readership. In the 1960s *Der Spiegel* was one of the major publications regularly consumed by Austrian students.⁹

⁷M. S., 'Modellathlet Deutschland', *manuskripte* 76/1982, pp. 3-9. Further references to *manuskripte*, the literary journal of Graz's 'Forum Stadtpark', will take the abbreviated form used above. See Key.

⁸See Hans Heinz Fabris, 'Das österreichische Mediensystem', in *Das politische System Österreichs*, edited by Heinz Fischer, second edition, (Vienna, 1977), pp. 501-535: 'Die Boulevardzeitungen ... , die durch die Entwicklung des Wiener Zeitungsmarktes in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit behindert waren, sind heute die unbestrittenen Auflagen-Spitzenreiter' (p. 511).

⁹Gerhard Roth reports reading *Der Spiegel* during the 1960s to the exclusion of almost all Austrian newspapers and magazines. *Interview 2*. See Key.

In the case of Austrian authors whose work is in any way demanding, the pattern of reception has been such that an author must first establish a reputation in West Germany *before* the Austrian press or publishing industry displays any serious interest. Peter Handke has found that even this subsequent interest is suspect. He compares it to the interest shown in 'Exportartikeln':

Für die Öffentlichkeit ist er austauschbar mit einem Kammersänger, einer Skifahrerin, einem Diskussionsleiter und der Schimpansin Judy aus 'Daktari' - man umwieselt ihn als eine Figur aus der Schauwelt, egal, welche Art von Arbeit ihn in diese Schießbudenumgebung ausgesetzt hat, in der er sich fremd fühlt und die er doch ein bißchen auch zu brauchen glaubt, weil er das, was er schreibt, zur öffentlichen Sache machen will.¹⁰

It was primarily due to the interest of the West German 'Kulturbetrieb' in detecting and marketing new developments in German literature wherever they occurred that the efforts of a number of young Graz authors to create outlets for their literary experiments eventually met with international response and became the literary-critical 'phenomenon of Graz'.

1.1.2 The Climate of Critical Reception in the Federal Republic in the 1960s

Publishers, critics, and reviewers of new literary works wish not only to be forewarned of developing trends, but understandably seek to be conceptually forearmed as well. Regrettably the compulsion to classify and categorise the new often obscures as much as it reveals. Nowhere was the tendency to turn literary criticism into a historically predictive pseudo-science, aimed at prescribing the social and political functions of literature, practised with greater zeal than in West Germany towards the close of the 1960s. One of the most extreme manifestations of this tendency was the announcement of the virtual 'Tod der Literatur' in November 1968 by Walter Boehlich, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and Karl Markus Michel in *Kursbuch 15*. Literary developments in the Federal Republic in the 1960s inevitably displayed some features shared by most Western societies in this decade of cultural upheaval. The basic pattern of literary production and reception, however, was quite unlike anything to be found at the same time in Britain, France, the United States, or just across the

¹⁰P. H., 'Österreich und die Schriftsteller', in Peter Handke, *Das Ende des Flanierens*, (Frankfurt/M, 1980), pp. 18-37 (p. 18).

border in Austria. Naturally this was not without consequences for the reception of new works by Austrian authors.

The development of literature and literary criticism in West Germany in the 1960s is characterised by the process of steadily increasing political polarisation which reached its explosive peak in the student revolt of 1967/68 and the formation of the 'außerparlamentarische Opposition' (APO). By the mid-1960s, both the production and critical reception of literature were subjected increasingly to the play of explicitly ideological considerations. The process of political polarisation had begun towards the end of the Adenauer era when younger authors associated with 'Gruppe 47', like Günter Grass and Martin Walser, in a mood of dissatisfaction with the relative neutrality of prevailing liberal anti-Fascism and anti-Communism, began to demand a literature which would stimulate social and political debate, not only about the recent Nazi past, but also about questionable political developments in the period of the 'Wirtschaftswunder'. Subsequent discussion moved rapidly away from the attitude of committed political liberalism advocated by Grass and Walser to the more radical critique of West German society and the questioning of the fundamental political effectiveness of literature by left-wing authors and critics like Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Peter Hamm.¹¹

The activities of the 'Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund' (SDS), which had broken away from the youth section of the official SPD in the early 1960s, greatly encouraged the growth of a Marxist-orientated discussion of the relationship between politics, literature, and social change. Carried over in the mid-1960s into critical journals like Enzensberger's *Kursbuch*, or *Kürbiskern* (both founded in 1965), the discussion drew authority and ideological support from the work of father-figures of the New Left like Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, and Ernst Bloch, thinkers who commanded no such wide following in Austria at the time. The decade saw the growth in West Germany of a new form of critical writing after the model of Benjamin, a form of political essay with a strong tendency towards systematic theorising on the relationship between literature and society. The writings of such critics as Lothar Baier, Karl-Heinz Bohrer, and Marianne Kesting had no real equivalent in Austria.

¹¹It is of interest to the discussion of developments in Graz to note here that Alfred Kolleritsch, the editor of *manuskripte*, corresponded with Hamm and Enzensberger in the early 1960s and that both contributed to early issues of the magazine: Enzensberger to *m* 7/1963 and Hamm to *m* 9/1963.

1.1.3 Literary Group Formation in West Germany

Almost everywhere in the Western world in the 1960s there was a major outbreak of compulsive labelling. At the level of cultural criticism, whether in art, film, music, or literature, the compulsion to label emerged seemingly as an intellectualised form of the packaging process to which all manner of consumer goods were subjected. As one commentator on what the art critic Robert Hughes called the decade of 'instant everything', has expressed it: 'labelling became a major disease. Unlike in the past, when labelling was generally posthumous, there was a plethora of over-zealous labelling ... not only on the part of the critics, but also the popular press'.¹² Whereas in the 1950s ideas about literary genres, for example, had been more or less confined to the traditional categories 'Drama', 'Roman', and 'Lyrik', with the usual subdivisions plus careful qualifications like 'phantastischer Realismus' (W. J. Schwarz) to take care of works like Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* which burst through established genre conventions, now categories began to proliferate using such labels as: 'engagierte Literatur', 'Dokumentartheater', 'Arbeiterliteratur', 'Neuer Realismus', 'APO-Literatur', 'Schocker-Pop', and 'Neo-Dada'. ('Konkrete Literatur' had already emerged in the 1950s in the form of 'konkrete poesie'.) The growing emphasis on ideological issues led to the appearance of a number of more or less discrete literary group formations. Established authors of 'Gruppe 47' continued to overshadow literary production until the last third of the decade, when a decline in the influence of writers like Grass, Lenz, and Böll on the younger generation became apparent.¹³ Alongside this established group and in some cases, like Enzensberger, defecting from it, there sprang up smaller, alternative literary forums which gathered up many predominantly younger authors who were unable to identify themselves or their work with the liberal policies of social concern advocated by the majority of 'Gruppe 47' authors. While a generational conflict undoubtedly played a role, it was not the decisive factor. Austrian authors of the same generation as many 'Gruppe 47' members - and in cases like Ilse Aichinger also belonging to 'Gruppe 47' - favoured rather than opposed authors of the following generation. In West Germany, however, political and not aesthetic considerations began to gain the upper hand in literary debates.

Amongst the most widely-published and influential of the literary groups which formed in the Federal Republic during the 1960s are Dortmund's

¹²Hugh Adams, *Art of the Sixties*, (Oxford, 1978), p. 24.

¹³By 1970 friends of Hans Werner Richter began advising him to let the work of the 'Gruppe 47' come to an end. Earlier Enzensberger had criticised the group's lack of political effectiveness in an essay, 'Die Clique', published in *Almanach* in 1962. In 1965, Heißenbüttel, also a member of 'Gruppe 47', published his 'Gruppenkritik' in *Merkur*, (August 1965), pp. 756-759.

'Gruppe 61' (Max von der Grün, Günter Wallraff, Angelika Mechtel), out of which later sprang the politically more radical 'Werkkreis Literatur der Arbeitswelt' (Günter Wallraff, F. C. Delius), the 'Kölner Schule des neuen Realismus' (Dieter Wellershof and the early work of Rolf Dieter Brinkmann), and the so-called 'Stuttgarter Schule' of 'experimentelle und konkrete Literatur'¹⁴ (Helmut Heißenbüttel, Max Bense, Eugen Gomringer), which, although its origins go back to the 1950s, first received wider public attention in the 1960s. Major contributors to critical journals like *Kursbuch*, Enzensberger, Walter Boehlich, Karl Marcus Michel, Michael Buselmeier, and Yaak Kar-sunke, also formed a group with a distinctive ideological voice, as did the promoters of an aggressive 'Pop-Literatur' like Brinkmann and R. R. Rygulla towards the close of the decade. What linked these otherwise often opposed groups was a tendency to relate their literary practice to a largely Neo-Marxist critique of what they held to be the repressive and excessively 'bürgerliche' power structure of the German Federal Republic.

1.1.4 The Formalist/Realist Debate and 'experimentelle Literatur'

The arguments in these literary circles centered around the notion of a politically committed literature, a 'littérature engagée' of the kind advanced in Jean-Paul Sartre's widely-read essay, 'Qu'est que c'est la littérature?'¹⁵

Another closely related literary debate also contributed a decisive measure of critical fire to the critical discourse into which the work of the 'Grazer' was initially received. The argument between 'Realismus' and 'Formalismus', between the proponents of works with 'formalist' stylistic features and the defenders of 'realistic' literature had its roots in the Realism vs. Formalism debate of the 1930s. Lukács's relentless attacks on Expressionism gave Marxist literary theory a set of working definitions on which later champions of realism could draw in their defence of what was essentially the traditional nineteenth-

¹⁴'Konkrete Literatur' developed out of the 'konkrete poesie' practised by Mon, Gomringer, Heißenbüttel amongst others as part of the German response to the international 'concrete poetry' movement of the 1950s and early 1960s. Among the members of Austria's 'Wiener Gruppe', Achleitner and Rühm displayed most interest in this form of writing. 'Konkrete Literatur' is the more comprehensive term which includes the short texts and poems of 'konkrete poesie' (what Walter Weiss calls 'die Herausarbeitung und Erprobungen von Elementen, Minimalstrukturen') and longer 'concrete' texts which go beyond piecemeal experimentation to become complex, integrated linguistic 'models' as in Heißenbüttel's *Projekt Nr. 1. D'Alemberts Ende* (Berlin, 1970). See Reinhard Döhl, 'Konkrete Literatur', in *DG* (1981), pp. 270-298.

¹⁵Published in German by Rowohlt as *Was ist Literatur?*, (Reinbek, 1965).

century view of narrative realism. The terms 'formalism' and 'formalist' are used here not in reference to the literary theories of the Russian Formalists, but to indicate an approach to literature whereby an author stresses the primacy of formal, stylistic features as the determiners of meaning. 'Realism' and 'realist' signify the approach of authors for whom an a priori historical 'content', based upon confidence in ordinary language and a belief in a substantial consensus reality, provides the primary orientation of the work.

The debate, begun in the late 1920s and never really concluded, flared up with renewed vigour in the 1960s. An upsurge of interest in Brecht's theoretical writings and the advent of 'konkrete Literatur' provided ample fuel to keep the blaze going until later in the decade when the performance of Handke's early 'Sprechstücke' outraged both younger and older critics who sought to define realism in terms of objective socio-political categories. Walter Jens claims to be able to identify the exact moment when what he describes as a 'formalistische Wendung gegen einen eingeschliffenen, engen, unreflektierten Realismus bzw. Verismus' first occurred in German literature after 1945. Jens locates the turning point in the spring of 1952 when the Austrian authors Ilse Aichinger, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Paul Celan read from their work at a 'Gruppe 47' congress in Niendorf on the Baltic Coast.¹⁶ Additional fuel was contributed to the formalist side of the debate, essential to an understanding of critics' expectations later in the 1960s, by the work of Austria's 'Wiener Gruppe': Friedrich Achleitner, H. C. Artmann, Konrad Bayer, Gerhard Rühm, and Oswald Wiener, and by pioneers of 'konkrete Literatur' in West Germany like Max Bense, Eugen Gomringer, Helmut Heißenbüttel, and Franz Mon. In relation to the work of these 'experimental' authors, for whom ordinary language became a laboratory for systematic research into language, the somewhat unsatisfactory term 'experimentelle Literatur' has frequently been employed in recent German literary criticism. All serious literature is obviously in some sense experimental. The term 'experimentelle Literatur', however, has been employed by German-speaking critics in the discussion of works by members of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and exponents of 'konkrete Literatur' in a highly specific manner which now makes it historically confusing to extend its use to the work of authors who do not come within the scope of its generally accepted definition. Therefore this term and its extension, 'sprachexperimentelle Literatur', will be employed here in this restricted sense.

West German practitioners of 'experimentelle Literatur', especially Heißenbüttel, Bense, and Gomringer, have produced a substantial body of theoretical and critical writings. What distinguishes 'experimentelle Literatur' from other types of literary experimentalism is the interest which these authors and their

¹⁶Walter Jens, *Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart; Themen, Stile, Tendenzen*, second edition, (Munich, 1966), pp. 129-130.

followers display in applying the theoretical insights of a rigorously conducted critique of language to their literary productions. This formal approach links the 'Wiener Gruppe', for example, directly to the Austrian tradition of the 'Sprachkritik' which began with insights into the intimate connections between language and epistemology gained around the turn of the century by philosophers and scientists like Ernst Mach, Ludwig Boltzmann, Franz Brentano, and Fritz Mauthner. Hofmannsthal's much quoted 'Chandos Brief' (1901/1902) is only one of many instances of the growing suspicion of language which begin to appear in the writings of Austrian scientists, philosophers, and authors around the turn of the century. After the cultural disruption of the Second World War, the central concerns of the 'Sprachkritik' reemerge to provide the theoretical basis for 'experimentelle Literatur'. What Austrian, Swiss, and West German adherents of this approach have in common is a largely neo-positivist concern to bring their literary practice into line with recent scientific and philosophical investigations of language from such varied fields as linguistics, philosophy of language, cybernetics, mathematics, communication theory, experimental psychology, sociology, and anthropology.¹⁷ Compositional techniques like montage, word-constellation and permutation, the use of palindromes, ideograms and pictograms, phonetic poetry, and the dialect poem, many of them taken over from the historical avant-garde of Dada and Surrealism, are combined with a neo-positivist approach to language. 'Experimentelle Literatur' aims to demonstrate and further explore the way in which ordinary language functions and how its concealed expressive and cognitive potential can be harnessed in the struggle to obtain personal, social, and political liberation. What the formalist-orientated proponents of this form of experimentalism in West Germany shared with opponents who favoured the direct, 'naively' realistic expression of a socio-political content, was a commitment to the idea that literature, if only it were practised rigorously enough, could contribute directly towards the process of social change thus hastening the ideological and material disintegration of West Germany's 'spätkapitalistische Gesellschaft'.¹⁸ In keeping with the programme of the historical avant-garde, 'experimentelle literatur' had a Utopian dimension. Like the work of earlier Dadaists and Surrealists, it has failed to resolve the fundamental contradiction between the need for an educated, even elitist audience - which

¹⁷The relationship between science and literature referred to here is summarised by Bense and Döhl in a short manifesto of 1964. See 'zur lage': *konkrete poesie: deutschsprachige autoren - anthologie*, edited by Eugen Gomringer, (Stuttgart, 1972), pp. 165-166.

¹⁸Heißenbüttel, for example, referred to this process as 'eine Sozialisierung der Sprache', an attack on the metaphorical language of the 'bürgerlichen Rechtfertigungspoeten'. H. H. in his introduction to Eugen Gomringer, *worte sind schatten: die konstellationen 1951-1968*, (Reinbek, 1969).

so far only an essentially middle-class society has managed to provide - and the egalitarian desire to eliminate the 'institution of art'. The bulk of 'experimentelle Literatur' is, however, directed firmly against the neo-romantic stress on the autonomy of aesthetic experience. For this reason it has sometimes included actionistic components - notably amongst the 'Wiener Gruppe' - aimed at emancipating the isolated individual from the politically ineffective privacy of withdrawal into the 'autonomous' sphere of aesthetic contemplation.

By the second half of the decade, the renewed formalist/realist debate had produced two major camps amongst authors and critics in West Germany. Traditional narrative realists found their staunchest ally in the critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki. The formalists counted Heißenbüttel and Gomringer amongst their leading proponents and received support from such critics as Heinrich Vormweg, and later, Jörg Drews. But the situation in West Germany was by no means simply a matter of polar oppositions in a relatively static field of conflicting interests. Handke's stormy encounter with Reich-Ranicki - summarised by Handke in his essay 'Marcel Reich-Ranicki und die Natürlichkeit' (1968)¹⁹ - shows how the concept of formalism could be wielded by conservative critics to oppose *any* work which departed from a normative definition of realism. The fact that Handke himself was attacked by other formalists like Heißenbüttel as well as by realists of the New Left like Reinhard Lettau and Peter Hamm²⁰ indicates that the division was not a straightforward formalist/realist dichotomy: it was subject to the influence of shifting strategic alliances in which political ideologies mingled with and often confused aesthetic considerations.

1.1.5 The Growth of Positivism in Literary Criticism

In the 1960s there began an intense theoretical discussion about the nature and function of literature. One outcome of this was a wide-spread demand for reforms in the teaching of literature in West German universities. What resulted was a 'Methodologisierung der Literaturwissenschaft', an endeavour to place the study of literature on a more scientific footing than the subjective 'werkimmanente Interpretation'²¹ which was then in favour. There was a widely felt need to bring literary studies into line with advances in the state of

¹⁹P. H., *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, (Frankfurt/M, 1972) pp. 203-207.

²⁰See Peter Hamm, 'Der neueste Fall von deutscher Innerlichkeit: Peter Handke', in *Konkret*, no. 12 (June 1969). Reprinted in *Über Peter Handke*, edited by Michael Scharang, (Frankfurt/M, 1972), pp. 304-314.

²¹See, for example, *Literaturwissenschaft heute*, edited by Friedrich Nemeč and Wilhelm Solms, (Munich, 1979).

knowledge and to relate literature to existing society. Nonetheless, efforts by some younger academic critics to establish a basis for a positivist 'science of literature' represented a by no means always healthy response to pressures from government and industry to justify the continued financing of university departments of languages and literature by attempting to match the theoretical rigour of the sciences with which they were competing for funds. This process of critical reevaluation which many more sceptical observers regarded as the 'scientisation' of literary studies, nonetheless transformed the practice of literary criticism in the Federal Republic and has had notable consequences for the reception of new works by the Graz authors. The rapid growth after 1967 of a 'materialistische Literaturtheorie' focussing on the social components of literary works, the new emphasis on linguistics and communication studies, the emergence of approaches based on the reception process ('Rezeptionsästhetik', 'Rezeptionsgeschichte'), on structuralist thought ('Strukturalismus'), on ideas developed from the 'Kritische Theorie' of the 'Frankfurter Schule' ('Kritische Ästhetik'), all contributed in some measure to the horizon of expectations prevalent among 'professional' readers of new literary works towards the end of the 1960s.

It was an atmosphere in which a number of younger editors working for publishers like Suhrkamp, as well as many younger critics became particularly susceptible to the temptation to categorise authors in terms related to the 'Politisierungsprozeß'.²² As the history of Handke's early critical reception in West Germany so profusely illustrates, there emerged amongst the 'neuen Linken' a marked tendency to submit both work and author to a form of ideological cross-examination which was prejudiced in favour of a literature of overt political commitment.

This sketch of the dynamics of West German literary production and reception in the 1960s is necessarily somewhat simplified. It passes over the many authors and critics who maintained positions of relative political independence throughout the decade. What it does establish is that the *new* works of Austrian literature originating in Graz were destined to appear on a stage where many other participants were already engaged in a polemical battle over ideological issues and where group allegiances were of primary importance.

²²See Urs Widmer, '1968': *Nach dem Protest: Literatur im Umbruch*, edited by W. Martin Lüdke, (Frankfurt/M, 1979), pp. 14-27.

1.1.6 The Austrian Response

The literary situation in Austria during the same period was subject to very different influences. The stress on political neutrality and social partnership in the Second Republic plus Austria's much less intensely industrialised economy encouraged a certain sense of distance from the political issues which animated the 'Politisierungsprozeß' in West Germany. In Austria's more conservative social and political climate the debate over politicisation met with only limited response. For most of Austria's younger authors, theoretical reflection on the political effectiveness of literature as a vehicle for political and social change was not regarded as a central issue. With a few notable exceptions like Michael Scharang, Peter Turrini, or 'Wespennest'²³ authors like Helmut Zenker and Gustav Ernst, there prevailed in Austria a suspicion of the kind of literature which attempted to express directly an author's commitment to a political programme. The 'Studentenbewegung', which proved a formative experience for many younger West German writers, occurred in Austrian universities on a very much reduced scale. Scharang, the only one of the Graz authors to be deeply involved with Austria's student movement, observed, however, that for the few Austrians who participated it was a significant period: 'Denn es war keine abstrakte Identifikation, denn es gab in Österreich ebenfalls eine, wenn auch kleine Studentenbewegung, in der ich aktiv sein konnte. Wenn im Ausland auch nie jemand von ihr gehört haben mag, in unserem vernagelten Parteienstaat war sie sensationell genug' (m 76/1982, p. 7). In terms of the reactions of the majority of younger Austrians, however, Scharang represents the view of only a small group of authors.

To a much greater extent than their West German contemporaries, Austrian authors have tended to remain 'Einzelgänger' who defend the idea of autonomy in aesthetic and political matters. Where, as in the case of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and later the 'Grazer', they have been drawn into literary communities and groups, they have not done so with the same cooperativeness and clearly stated programmatic intentions as was the case in the Federal Republic in the 1960s. Indeed, Handke goes so far as to claim that, 'in keinem Land treten die Schriftsteller einander so sehr als Feinde gegenüber wie in Österreich'.²⁴ His observation is borne out by such events as the refusal of the official Austrian PEN-Club either to accept or to acknowledge demands for a more open-minded approach to literature made by several dozen leading

²³This literary magazine was founded in 1969 in Vienna. Other *Wespennest* authors included Peter Henisch and E. A. Richter. The programme to which contributors subscribed centered on the 'Wiederentdeckung der außerpersönlichen Wirklichkeit' and included an Austrian version of the New Left style of 'Reportage' popularised by Günter Wallraff and Max von der Grün.

²⁴P. H., 'Österreich und die Schriftsteller', p. 20. See Note 10.

Austrian authors in the early 1970s. Out of frustration with continual back-biting on the part of well-known conservative members, they formed the 'Grazer Autorenversammlung' in 1972.²⁵ A comparison between the misanthropic contempt which Thomas Bernhard - together with Handke undoubtedly the most widely known contemporary Austrian author - has heaped upon post-war Austria and all manner of literary institutions, and the more benevolent attitude of long-suffering social and political engagement which characterises the approach of leading West German authors like Böll or Grass, illustrates the extent to which the Austrian literary situation appears to tolerate, if not to actively foster, even the more extreme forms of individualism. The strategic alliances between authors which have been formed in the Second Republic have generally arisen from the desire of the participants to keep literary practice as free as possible from enforced conformity to ideological interests. Above all this has involved opposition to the resurgence of Austro-Fascist and German-national ideologies in the 1950s and 1960s. At a time of unprecedented systematising of critical thought in West Germany, the majority of Austrian authors also reserved the right to remain critical of the critiques. Comparatively unencumbered by the compulsion to strive for a total synthesis of theory and practice, young Austrian authors selected from the plethora of ideas emerging in the 1960s only what they believed to be the most suitable to their own situation. They ignored the reproaches of inconsistency made by authors and critics who styled themselves as the watch-dogs of the 'revolution' or the status-quo. Handke, for example, who considered himself bound to no particular literary party, managed in time to upset almost everyone.

It is difficult to draw parallels between the development of Austrian and West German literature in the first two decades of the Second Republic. For the literary historian the fact of Austria's considerable dependence on the massive West German literary industry, which makes full-time writing possible by providing a large market and sophisticated critical feed-back, means that the image of recent Austrian literary developments is largely that which has been filtered through a critical apparatus not of Austria's own making. This has not been overlooked by the authors themselves. It is in this sense of Austria's cultural dependence on the Federal Republic that Gerhard Roth has referred to Austria as an 'invention': 'Österreich gibt es nicht. Darum kann man wie ich in Österreich ins Exil gehen. Da Österreich sowieso eine Erfindung ist, kann man naturgemäß hier nicht leben. Mein Leben ist abhängig von Deutschland, ob ich will oder nicht!'²⁶ The idea that Austria is as much a matter of invention as it is

²⁵An account of the events which led up to this schism in the ranks of Austria's PEN-Club is given by Hilde Spiel in 'PEN and anti-PEN' in *KLGG*, 'Die zeitgenössische Literatur Österreichs', pp. 116-122.

²⁶'Die österreichische Dimension', directed by Ernst Trost and Kurt Faudon, *ORF* (television), transmitted 26 October 1982.

a historical reality is quite widespread amongst the Graz authors. In a discussion of the 'Austrian idea' as the Hapsburg myth, Handke speaks of his need to invent an Austria 'jenseits der Politik': 'Ich habe Lust, ein anderes Land zu erfinden, ein Österreich, das sicherlich existiert, aber weder in den Zeitungen noch in den Statistiken ... Ich fühle das Bedürfnis, mein Land noch einmal zu erfinden, auf eine Weise, die nicht realistisch ist, mit realistischen Details, sondern mit einer Vision, die ich durch das Schreiben zu erringen hoffe.'²⁷

The approaches are different but the sense that the Austria of the Second Republic is somehow culturally lacking was pervasive among younger Austrian authors. In 1969 Alfred Kolleritsch, the editor of *manuskripte*, defended the magazine's policy of non-alignment against criticism from Scharang and Elfriede Jelinek, amongst others, who favoured engagement in a theoretical discussion of literature after the West German model, by arguing that the cultural machinery of Austria was fundamentally different: 'In Österreich gibt es keine Kulturindustrie, die den Aufstand aufsaugte: hier gibt es nur ein Kulturdebakel, das endgültig würde, wenn man vor lauter unerfüllten Wünschen das Debakel in seiner historischen Zementiertheit selbständig wirtschaften ließe, ohne die lebende Kunst in den Bestand hineinzutreiben'.²⁸ (*m* 25/1969, 'marginalie'). Kolleritsch's position was representative of the views of all but a few younger Austrian authors. He emphasised the relative autonomy of literature and insisted that in Austria, and particularly in Graz, literature was still capable of achieving '... was man ihr anderswo längst abgesprachen hat' (*m* 29- 30/1970, 'marginalie').

²⁷In an article for 'Les nouvelles littéraires', no. 22, (29 June 1978), pp. 15-17, translated in part into German by Ulrich Greiner in *Der Tod des Nachsommers*, p. 39. See Note 4.

²⁸An analysis of the confrontation between Kolleritsch and Scharang over the editorial policy of *manuskripte* is given in Elizabeth Wiesmayr, *Die Zeitschrift 'manuskripte': 1960-1970*, (Königstein/Ts., 1980), pp. 40-44 and pp. 55-56. The debate can be traced through the 'marginalien' from *m* 25/1969 to *m* 27/1969. Further references to Wiesmayr's study take the form *Wiesmayr*.

1.2 FROM VIENNA TO GRAZ: CULTURAL POLITICS IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC

1.2.1 A Dangerous Cultural Vacuum

In a letter written to Alfred Andersch in 1963 (3 May), Kolleritsch described Graz as lying in a 'literarischen Niemandsland ... abseitig und wohl abgeschirmt gegen alles, was man zum Strom eines neuen Bewußtseins rechnen kann'.²⁹ What he refers to around the same time as a 'gefährliches Kulturvakuum ... in das immer mehr braune Luft einströmt'³⁰ was not a phenomenon confined to the Austrian provinces, remote from the cultural and economic capital of Vienna. It was simply a more extreme instance of the general cultural isolation which had prevailed in Austria since the end of the Second World War. This isolation, combined with the fact that Austria had to a considerable extent been spared by the allied powers from the extensive de-Nazification which took place in Germany after the war, produced a widespread and sometimes sinister form of provincialism. The cultural climate of the early years of the Second Republic was oppressive. The gaze of Austria's cultural establishment, including the majority of authors and critics, was almost hypnotically fixed in contemplation of a fertile 'Hapsburg myth'. Claudio Magris³¹ has unmasked this persistence of the 'Austrian idea' in the 1950s as a form of cultural inertia arising from an inability to come to terms with the more mundane or disquieting realities of the present. A quasi-mystical absorption in the vision of Austria's rich cultural tradition - 'das Große Erbe' - was believed to be capable of restoring the spiritual harmony shattered by the collapse of the First Republic and the subsequent National Socialist interregnum. A policy of 'Austrianism' was widely promulgated in the 1950s by such official cultural organs as *Forum* and *Wort in der Zeit*. It was an attempt to uncover a specifically Austrian literary tradition, primarily to dispel the guilt and anxiety caused by the nearly fatal recent merger with a more sinister 'Greater-German Tradition'. As Gerhard Amanshauser has ironically observed of his homeland: 'Es gibt Länder, die weit mehr Vergangenheit als Zukunft haben'.³² Authors

²⁹From Kolleritsch's correspondence: *Wiesmayr*, p. 30.

³⁰From a letter to Enzensberger: *Wiesmayr*, p. 30.

³¹*Der habsburgische Mythos in der österreichischen Literatur*, (Salzburg, 1966). See also his essay, 'Der unauffindbare Sinn. Zur österreichischen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts' in *Klagenfurter Universitätsreden*, No. 9, (Klagenfurt, 1978).

³²G. A., 'Über Nationalgefühl im allgemeinen und österreichisches Nationalgefühl im besonderen', in *Glückliches Österreich: Literarische Besichtigung eines Vaterlandes*, edited by Jochen Jung, (Reinbek, 1980), pp. 14-18 (p. 18).

and critics set out to promote the 'timeless and enduring qualities' of Austrian literature and to create a separate Austrian identity.

Wieland Schmied, the Austrian art-historian, who with H. C. Artmann was associated with the so-called 'Mödlinger Gruppe' in Vienna in the 1950s, summarises the cultural isolation of the Second Republic in revealing terms:

Kein Land ist so isoliert von der Gegenwart wie Österreich. In Prag beobachtet man genauer, was in New York oder in London vor sich geht, als in Wien. In Sydney ist man besser über experimentelle Unternehmungen in Turin oder Brüssel informiert als irgendwo in Österreich, Graz eingeschlossen. Woher kommt das?

Der wichtigste Grund scheint mir in der Selbstgenügsamkeit des Österreicherers zu liegen, in seiner 'kulturellen Autarkie'. *Kultur ist etwas, was er schon hat.* ... Der Österreicher hat eine überreiche Tradition, und deshalb glaubt er, auf Gegenwart verzichten zu können. Allzu gerne meint der Österreicher, es gebe einen Weg ins 'Überzeitliche', der an der Gegenwart vorbeiführt.³³

The novels of older authors like Heimito von Doderer (b. 1896), Albert Paris Gütersloh (b. 1887), and George Saiko (b. 1892), as well as of representatives of the middle generation like Herbert Eisenreich (b. 1925) and Gerhard Fritsch (b. 1924), typify the restaurative tendency. For Doderer, Gütersloh, and Saiko, there was no contradiction between their artistic aims and the concentration on a spiritual reconstruction of a greater past: they had experienced the final years of the Hapsburg era at first hand and could draw on it creatively. (Doderer and Gütersloh were in fact among the few artists who actively encouraged avant-garde literary experiments in the 1950s). But for younger novelists like Eisenreich and Fritsch 'Austrianism' proved to be a fatal lure which stifled their own creativity and arrested the development of the Austrian novel at a time when other European literatures were engaged in productive experimentation. Fritsch, who had written the pathetic-nostalgic *Moos auf den Steinen* (1956), in a mood of critical self-examination later identified the essential components of this 'traditionelle Gesinnung' as sentimentality, illusory escape into the past, pseudo-redemption, fixation on death.³⁴

Evidence for the general suspicion of the new and for the repression of the need for artistic experiment is amply provided by the history of the attempts made by the 'Wiener Gruppe' to find outlets for their work.³⁵ The group's

³³'Bildende Kunst', in *Das neue Österreich: Geschichte der Zweiten Republik*, edited by Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik, (Graz, 1975), p. 313.

³⁴ See Walter Weiss, 'Die Literatur der Gegenwart in Österreich', in *DG* (1981), p. 609.

³⁵Well summarised in Gerhard Rühm's introduction to *Konrad Bayer: das Gesamtwerk*, edited by G. R., (Reinbek, 1977).

achievements have since been proudly acclaimed by Austrian cultural officials. In Vienna during the 1950s, however, members of the 'Wiener Gruppe' found it all but impossible to publish and perform more than a small part of their work. It was in the pages of Graz's *manuskripte* in the 1960s that many texts by Bayer, Rühm, and Wiener appeared in print for the first time. It was as an expression of his disgust with the general climate of smugness and self-satisfaction in cultural matters, that Handke later referred to Austria as 'das Fette, an dem ich wüрге'.³⁶ In his essay 'Persönliche Bemerkungen zum Jubiläum der Republik', Handke describes Austria in the 1950s as a country in which 'es noch so viele geheime Besatzungsmächte gibt ... Diese eigene Welt war ein Österreich, in dem man sich ohne Russen und Engländer besetzt fühlte, von den Besatzungsmächten der materiellen Not, der Herzenskälte der Religion, der Gewalttätigkeit von Traditionen, der brutalen Gespreiztheit der Obrigkeit, die mir nirgends fetter und stumpfsinniger erschien als in Österreich'.³⁷ In its more hysterical form, the literary 'Austrianism' of the 1950s resulted in such culturally embarrassing episodes as the Brecht-boycott initiated and sustained by the editor of *Forum*, Friedrich Torberg. For almost a decade the boycott effectively prevented the performance of Brecht's work on any major Viennese or provincial stage.³⁸ In Vienna, as well as in Styria and other Austrian provinces, there was (and still is) a large public for *Heimatliteratur*. Alongside the merely conservative novels of Peter Rosegger, Karl-Heinz Waggerl, and Paula Grogger, there flourished *the Blut und Boden* variety - the unrepentent, ideologically poisonous works of authors like Bruno Brehm and Josef Papesch. The works of Austrian Modernist authors like Robert Musil, Hermann Broch, Doderer and Gütersloh, which were accessible in their literary form to more conservative readers but also progressive enough in their content to serve as bridges to the more radical experiments of the 'Wiener Gruppe', were hardly read in Austria in the 1950s.³⁹ The author most widely read by the emerging younger generation was Kafka.

³⁶*Das Gewicht der Welt*, (Salzburg, 1977). This quotation from the Suhrkamp edition, (Frankfurt a.M., 1979), p. 1.

³⁷In *Das Ende des Flanierens*, pp. 56-59 (p. 56).

³⁸Friedrich Torberg (b. 1908) was the editor of *Forum* from 1954 to 1964. Like *Encounter* in Britain, *Forum* received some of its financial backing from the American C.I.A. Its editorial policy was decidedly anti-communist. The Brecht-ban in Vienna's Burgtheater was not finally lifted until October 1966.

³⁹The first post-war edition of Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, appeared in 1952 and the improved version in 1958. Broch was read but not widely. Gütersloh's *Sonne und Mond* did not appear until 1962. Parts I and II of Doderer's *experimental Roman Nr. 7* appeared in 1963 and 1967. Doderer did contribute to early issues of *manuskripte* (m 5,6,7,8,10) and in November 1960 he read from his work at 'Forum Stadtpark' as the first author in the series on the 'Deutschen Roman der Gegenwart'.

1.2.2 The Cultural Background in Graz

Graz is the capital of the province of Styria. With a population of ca. 250,000 it is Austria's second largest city. Although not primarily industrial, the region is comparatively wealthy and includes a number of large landholders and investors among its leading citizens. In relation to the major cultural centres of Europe, however, Graz lies in a geographical cul-de-sac. To the south, the main road runs into the mountains which border on Slovenia. To the north are mountains which only descend to the plain by Salzburg. To the West is the even more provincial city of Klagenfurt, while Vienna lies to the east, some two and a half hours away by rail over the Semmering. Situated on the banks of the River Mur, Graz provides a stop-over for tourists in the summer months and a year-round watering-place for 'Gastarbeiter' on the way to or from Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey. At the end of the 1950s, with its unusually high percentage of retired civil servants, the 'Pensionopolis' of Graz, as it has been labelled by its Austrian critics, was not without cultural life. The performances which filled the city's theatres and concert-halls, however, catered to the tastes of traditionalists. The canon of literary taste, upheld by Styria's official cultural institutions and publicly defended in 'Leserbriefe' by the vast majority of Graz's 'Bildungsbürger', was deeply conservative and calculated not to disturb the tranquility of a city which numbered more than a few former N.S.D.A.P. members and ardent Nazi supporters among its more influential citizens.⁴⁰

As the case of the author Franz Nabl⁴¹ demonstrates, Graz had also included since the 1920s a more open-minded cultural element, but from the time of the Dollfuß regime, it had been very much repressed. Only towards the end of the 1950s did significant, progressive opposition forces organise themselves into an effective form.

⁴⁰The following passage from an interview with Vienna's Simon Wiesenthal is revealing: 'In Wien kann der Nationalsozialismus nie so hochgestellt werden, weil hier zuviel Internationales ist. Und denn ist noch eine Sache: Es haben sich nach dem Kriege gerade die Größen des Dritten Reiches, die Österreicher waren, in die Provinz verkrochen. Und dort sind sie geblieben. Jeder von ihnen hatte natürlich seinen Kreis um sich. Viele von ihnen sind weg von den Kriegsverbrecherlisten und hinein in die verstaatlichten Betriebe. ... VOEST heißt 'Versteckte österreichische Staatsfeinde'. In *impuls - kritische Zeitschrift für Studenten*, 10 (Graz, Sept/Oct. 1964), p. 4.

⁴¹Franz Nabl (b. 1883 - d. 1974) a Graz author who is sometimes wrongly thought of as a 'Heimatsdichter'. Nabl, described by Handke as 'ein wichtiger österreichischer Schriftsteller', was rediscovered and adopted by the younger Graz authors Handke, Bauer, Kolleritsch, and Roth. See Handke 'Österreich und die Schriftsteller: am Beispiel Franz Nabl', in *Das Ende des Flanierens*, pp. 18-21. See also Gerhard Roth, 'Über den 90jährigen Franz Nabl', in *MBM* (See Key), pp. 93-96.

If the literary strategies adopted by Kolleritsch, as the editor of *manuskripte*, and by other 'Grazer' like Handke, Bauer, and later, G. Roth, are to be seen in their proper perspective, the unusual degree of cultural isolation experienced by progressively orientated artists in Graz until the late 1960s must be taken into account. It is at first somewhat difficult for outside observers, including many West Germans, to grasp the extent to which a knowledge of cultural developments taken for granted in most European and North American cities at the time cannot similarly be assumed to exist in Graz. At the close of the 1950s, when writers and artists in other international centres were freely engaging in experimental projects often supported by public funds, in Graz the outlook for any genuine experimentation was bleak: 'In Graz gab es so gut wie keine Kenntnis neuerer Kunstformen, die Isolation vom europäischen Kulturleben, bedingt durch Krieg und Faschismus, blieb über zehn Jahre nach Kriegsende noch wirksam'.⁴² Art forms which departed in any significant way from established classical, realist/naturalist, or popular/folk-art norms were readily condemned as 'entartet' by critics writing in the cultural pages of Graz's leading dailies, the *Kleine Zeitung*, the *Südost-Tagespost*, or *Neue Zeit*.

⁴²Manfred Mixner, 'Grazer Gruppe & Co.', in *Merian: Graz*, 31, (Sept. 1978), pp. 46-47 (p. 46).

1.3 THE 'SOGENANNTTE GRAZER GRUPPE': THE EMERGENCE OF A LITERARY-HISTORICAL PROFILE

1.3.1 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte*: the Organisational Basis of the 'Grazer Gruppe'

The initiative which resulted in the founding of the decidedly anti-traditionalist Graz artists' organisation 'Forum Stadtpark' stemmed in the first instance from the 'Junge Gruppe', a group of Graz painters, sculptors, architects and photographers who were interested in pursuing recent international developments in the arts. Members of the 'Junge Gruppe' like Günter Waldorf, Hannes Schwarz, and Richard Winkler had already in 1953 broken away from the 'Seession', Graz's only other artists' group open to progressive influences. Waldorf searched for ways to create an opening in Graz for the type of avant-garde art which caused near-hysteria in the minds of the city's cultural guardians. In 1958 he hit on the idea of turning the city's derelict 'Stadtpark Cafe' into an exhibition centre. Waldorf's project rapidly gained support from others interested in creating in Graz what they felt to be a much needed cultural institution. The history of the ensuing struggle with Graz's conservative city-fathers, who at one stage tried to put an abrupt end to the matter by threatening to demolish the building altogether, underlines the extreme polarisation of progressive and conservative cultural forces in Graz. With help from the Graz 'Künstlerclub' and the 'Steirische Schriftstellerbund', an action-committee bearing the name 'Forum Stadtpark' was formed and, after a vigorous and at times virulent campaign which drew support from sympathisers in Vienna, the arts-centre of the same name was officially opened on 4 November 1960.

'Forum Stadtpark' has as its permanent headquarters the renovated 'Stadtpark Cafe' and functions essentially in the manner of an arts-laboratory. Alongside a programme for the visual arts, provision was made in the statutes for the promotion of new literature, theatre, and cabaret. At the same time, the association called into being its own house publication with the title *manuskripte* under the editorship of the poet Alois Hergouth (later replaced by Günter Waldorf who has since organised the quantitatively much smaller visual arts content of the magazine), and of the author Alfred Kolleritsch.

The building was initially renovated with funds which the association itself had managed to raise. After it had gained grudging official approval, 'Forum Stadtpark' received a measure of regular financial support from the cultural budgets of the City of Graz and the Province of Styria. The association thus became answerable to some extent to official representatives of the local 'Kulturbürokratie'. In keeping with Austrian bureaucratic tradition, this amounted to a formidable tangle of regulations and committees which Waldorf and others learned could be manipulated at least some of the time to the association's

advantage. With its large number of conservative 'Kulturbürger', since the founding of the Second Republic in 1955 Styria has produced a richer cultural budget than any other Austrian province. It is one of the paradoxes of Austrian cultural history that this very conservative province - the striking persistence of the 'Steireranzug' as a normal mode of dress is but one outward token of this - has been persuaded since the founding of 'Forum Stadtpark' to invest heavily in a number of experimental ventures. The success of the Graz authors across the border appears to have convinced some Styrian cultural authorities that even when they do not understand it, art is a useful means of promoting Graz and the province. Later in the 1960s, the 'Landeskulturreferent' of the time, Dr. Hanns Koren, succeeded in organising the 'Steirische Akademie', an international congress for scientists and other academics, the bi-annual art exhibition, 'Trigon', and the 'Internationale Malerwochen'. All three institutions came to form integral parts of Graz's annual 'Festival der Avantgarde', the 'Steirischer Herbst', which first took place in 1968. The polarisation of conservative and progressive forces in Graz, however, remained entrenched.

In view of such developments, it may seem surprising that the finances of *manuskripte* were precarious until 1972. Even at the outset, there was by no means always agreement between the younger and older generations of artists and writers invited by its ruling committee to become participating 'members' of 'Forum Stadtpark', that is, to use its facilities, take part in exhibitions, performances, readings, and discussions. Although 'Forum Stadtpark' had been officially condoned, its activities were regarded with intense suspicion by conservative defenders of Styrian and Austrian 'cultural standards'. Throughout its history, the association and its extensions, *manuskripte* and the literary section of the 'Steirischer Herbst', have frequently been the object of bitter attacks, legal censure, financial pressure, and the threat of closure. Older members of 'Forum Stadtpark', including its first president, Emil Breisach, regarded the contents of *manuskripte* as unnecessarily provocative in view of the association's already sensitive relations with the city. His fears were not unfounded. In 1966, for example, as a result of an anonymous complaint over supposedly indecent sections in Oswald Wiener's *Die Verbesserung von Mitteleuropa*, which was being published serially, the magazine became embroiled in a pornography trial. The local press made it front page news, but when a Vienna court dismissed the case, only one Graz newspaper mentioned the fact.⁴³ From the outset sales and subscriptions failed to cover printing costs. The first issue, an edition of 100 hectographed copies, was distributed at the opening of 'Forum Stadtpark'. The second issue of 800 copies was sponsored by a Styrian bank, but when the manager read the proof-copy and saw poems

⁴³See Mixner, 'Ausbruch aus der Provinz', in *Wie die Grazer auszogen, die Literatur zu erobern: Texte, Porträts, Analysen und Dokumente junger österreichischer Autoren*, edited by P. Laemmle and J. Drews, revised edition (Munich, 1979), p. 13-28 (p. 22).

by such writers as Okopenko, Artmann, Bayer, and Rühm, he ordered the name of the bank to be blanked out. The committee of 'Forum Stadtpark' regarded the magazine largely as a financial burden and an embarrassment. For a number of years they kept secret from the controllers of the cultural budget the fact that the magazine received financial support from 'Forum Stadtpark'. It was not until 1972 that *manuskripte* began to receive support from Austria's state cultural purse. This, in spite of the fact that by the late 1960s *manuskripte* was widely regarded as the best German avant-garde literary publication.⁴⁴ The magazine rigorously maintained a policy of publishing only original, previously unpublished works. Contributors received nothing: *manuskripte* has never been in a position to pay an honorarium. The magazine's survival owes much to the energy, devotion, ingenuity, and dogged persistence of Alfred Kolleritsch and to the willingness of its contributing authors to provide original material free of charge.⁴⁵

1.3.2 Early Group Activities at 'Forum Stadtpark': the 'Studio der Jungen'

The literary activities of 'Forum Stadtpark' - the practical realisation of the 'Referat Literatur' contained in the association's statutes - were initially under control of a "mittlere Generation" der damals etwa Vierzigjährigen, die sich in hohem Ausmaß mit der "bildungs-politischen Aufgabe" identifizierte, und sich in der Literatur für eine gemäßigte Moderne einsetzte'.⁴⁶ Younger authors, who took a much greater interest in *manuskripte*, gathered around the Forum's 'Studio der Jungen' which had been assigned to Kolleritsch. It was out of the group activities of the 'Studio der Jungen' that Kolleritsch's 'sogenannte Grazer Gruppe' soon began to emerge. His wide knowledge of literature generally and his specific interest in contemporary developments caused him to view *manuskripte* as an important communication device which could bring news of what was going on in the outside world. This, he hoped, would serve as a stimulus and encouragement for the new in Graz and would foster the growth of local talent. The results would then in turn be communicated via the magazine to others as evidence of the desire and ability of younger Austrian

⁴⁴The metal foil cover of *m* 23-24/1968 carried a quote from Karl-Heinz Bohrer: 'Als die beste deutschsprachige Avantgarde-Zeitschrift wären die in Graz gedruckten *manuskripte: Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst, Kritik*, zu nennen', in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 May 1968.

⁴⁵Kolleritsch's services as an editor are given full credit in the special issue 'Für Alfred Kolleritsch 1981', edited by Eisendle and Hoffer.

⁴⁶*Wiesmayr*, p. 12.

authors to break through the shell of cultural provincialism. Kolleritsch's pragmatic concept of the literary strategy which would prove effective in the face of severe conservative opposition 'in Graz, das wirklich die "moderne Kunst" hysterisch ablehnt' (A. K.) led him to refuse to align *manuskripte* with any one stream of contemporary literary development. Instead he loaded the magazine with contributions which represented a heterogeneous mixture of later modernist and avant-garde styles to be fired broadside at the opposing forces.⁴⁷

In 1960, the 'Studio der Jungen' began a series of readings called 'Studio Abende.' These concentrated on presenting literary works by Graz authors which were more avant-garde than those featured in the Forum's main literary programme. Texts - usually poetry - were presented, often with jazz accompaniment. Kolleritsch and Frischmuth both read in the course of these 'Studio Abende' between 1960 and 1962. In 1962, the 'Studio Abende' were transformed into the 'Dunkelkammern.' These embodied a more pointedly aggressive attempt to present works which attacked and undermined traditional notions of literature. For the first of these 'Dunkelkammern' on 26 June 1962, Kolleritsch prepared a manifesto which provocatively subverted the generally simplistic view of modern and avant-garde art held by Graz's culturally conservative majority:

Man teilt die Welt in eine heile Hälfte, identifiziert sie mit der Natur, zu der man Gott, die Engel, das Gute, das Lichte, das Schöne zählt, und in eine andere Hälfte, dunkler, schlechter, abwegiger, negativer. Wo das Positive herrscht, prangt das ewig Gültige, nistet die Form, triumphiert die Erhebung, sekretieren die guten Drüsen, das Heile west, die Heimat ruft. Wo das Negative herrscht, taucht die moderne Kunst auf.⁴⁸

Included in the programme were readings by Kolleritsch, Frischmuth, and Bauer. Within the framework provided by the 'Dunkelkammern', a number of works by authors later referred to as the 'sogenannte Grazer Gruppe' were read or performed. Texts by Handke were read for the first time by two Graz actors on 21 January 1964.⁴⁹ Shortly afterwards Handke's first contribution to *manuskripte*, 'Die Überschwemmung', appeared in *m* 10/1964, p. 18f). On 23 June 1964, Falk and Bauer read from their work. On 13 July 1965, Kolleritsch appeared together with Bauer, Falk, and Handke - Handke for the first time and

⁴⁷Kolleritsch's depictions of the early years of *manuskripte* frequently employ terms of revolt and revolution. See extracts from A. K. 'Das Forum Stadtpark Graz', Radio Zagreb, 1969, given in Mixner, 'Ausbruch aus der Provinz'.

⁴⁸From the unpublished manifesto. An extract can be found in *Wiesmayr*, p. 19.

last time in person in the context of the 'Dunkelkammern'. Other authors to appear in the 'Dunkelkammern' between 1962 and 1965, included Oswald Wiener, who read extracts from *Die Verbesserung von Mitteleuropa* (25 April 1965), and Scharang, who presented some of his theoretical and experimental texts (13 July 1965). After the last of the 'Dunkelkammern' on 23 October 1965, only Bauer and Falk continued to perform along similar lines. In their 'Pop-Lesungen', they presented their ironic, pseudo-philosophy, 'Happy Art and Attitude'. In the manner of the counter-cultural 'Happenings' of the 1960s, banal and trivial elements taken from current pop-culture were blended in a mood of mock-seriousness with the aesthetic earnestness of high-art. In the performance held at 'Forum Stadtpark' on 15 December 1965, which included the staging of card-games, a boxing match, and 'Body-Art', Falk read from the 'great forerunners' of the 'movement', Schiller, Freud, and Herbert Marcuse, who was then barely known in Graz.

These early literary activities frequently provoked negative comment in the Graz press: 'Die Traditionen des betulichen Provinziellen, in denen "das Lokale durch Blut- und Boden-Parolen zum Völkischen hochstilisiert wurde" (Alfred Kolleritsch in einem Aufsatz für Radio Zagreb), kamen in der Konfrontation mit den neueren künstlerischen Ausdrucksformen wieder ans Tageslicht; die *manuskripte* wurden angefeindet ... die Autoren ... aus dem *Forum Stadtpark* ... wurden in den konservativen Tageszeitungen beschimpft, man neidete ihnen den raschen Erfolg im "Ausland", der vor allem für Handke und Bauer sehr groß war'.⁵⁰ There were also conflicts between these younger authors and some older, more conservative members of 'Forum Stadtpark' itself. Although there was a large measure of political consensus between Forum members in combating reactionary ideologies, there were considerable differences in aesthetic matters: '*auch unter den Schriftstellern*, die keineswegs einen homogenen Personenkreis bildeten. Das, was später mit dem Begriff *Grazer Literatur* identifiziert werden sollte, mußte sich erst in langdauernden Prozessen herauskristallisieren'.⁵¹

From 1966 onwards local public reaction to the work of the young 'Grazer' began to take a more favourable turn. Although attacks continued to occur on into the 1970s, 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte* won a measure of enduring support from some local literary critics. As Wiesmayr has noted, the 'Grazer Autoren' could regard themselves as finally having 'arrived' in Graz when in the *Kleine Zeitung* (2 April 1969), in an article on developments in 'Forum Stadtpark' under the presidency of Günter Waldorf (1967-1969), it was stated: 'Der Übergang vom avantgardistischen Enfant terrible im Kulturleben unserer

⁵⁰Mixner, 'Grazer Gruppe & Co.', p. 46.

⁵¹Wiesmayr, p. 8-9.

Stadt zu einem beinahe schon institutionellen Zentrum des geistigen Lebens unseres Landes wurde in Waldorfs Amtsführung abgeschlossen'.⁵²

1.3.3 The Initial Reception of 'Grazer Literatur' in West Germany

A reconstruction of the process of reception whereby the attention of West German publishers and critics was first drawn towards Graz in the 1960s, reveals the catalytic effect generated by the launching of Handke's literary career. Although not identified by publishers and critics as such at the time, Handke was the first of the young Austrian authors to emerge from the provincial hinterland of Graz. The year 1966 can be seen as a turning point in the development of Austrian literature in the Second Republic. The leading representative of the pre-war generation, Heimito von Doderer, died and Peter Handke, who was destined to become the most prominent member of the post-war generation, made his extraordinary debut on the West German literary scene as the most celebrated and the most vilified young author of the time.

In March 1966, Handke's novel, *Die Hornissen*, a work close to the type of the French 'nouveau roman'⁵³, was published by Suhrkamp. Handke's earliest published texts reveal his interest in the techniques of the 'nouveau roman'.⁵⁴ The novel involved a complex displacement of narrative perspectives and made considerable demands on the reader. Its initial appearance attracted scant attention from critics. Although the novel had been accepted by the prestigious Suhrkamp Verlag, Handke was as yet unknown. Then followed what is perhaps the most widely misunderstood, and on the part of some West German critics, most wilfully misrepresented episode in the recent history of German literature.

In April 1966, Handke attended the 'Gruppe 47' congress in Princeton. In the course of a discussion with members of the group he made his by now widely known denunciation of what he termed their 'Beschreibungsimpotenz'.

⁵²Wiesmayr, p. 29.

⁵³An analysis of the reception of the 'nouveau roman' by German authors is made by R. Watt: 'Andersch, Böll, Lenz, and Schnurre on the Nouveau Roman', in *New German Studies*, 9, no. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 123-143. The focus of the 'nouveau roman' on consciousness rather than on conscience was criticised by 'Gruppe 47' authors. Alain Robbe-Grillet's theoretical essays were published in *Akzente* between 1956 and 1962. In Austria *Wort in der Zeit* carried an article 'Le nouveau Roman', no. 12 (1965), pp. 32-33. R-G's *Pour un nouveau roman* (1963), appeared in German as *Argumente für einen neuen Roman* (1965).

⁵⁴See, for example, 'Der Ausbruch des Krieges', in *Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrats* (Salzburg, 1967): revised edition, (Frankfurt, 1981), pp. 28-33.

He argued that their general approach to language and their literary depiction of the world was inadequate to the complexity of experience. His subsequent writings have made abundantly clear what he was criticising. At the time, however, the remarks made by this virtually unknown young Austrian author created a furore. West German authors and critics like Erich Kuby, Reinhard Lettau, and Peter Hamm worked hard to defame an author who was not yet known, let alone famous. They succeeded in turning Handke's Princeton appearance into a literary scandal of legendary proportion. Rolf Michaelis, amongst others, has argued convincingly that Handke's statement was neither the boisterous interruption of the congress's proceedings it was presented as in the popular press, nor was it as one critic claimed 'eine mutige Infragestellung des literarischen Alleinvertretungsanspruchs der "Gruppe 47" ... ein gezielter Eklat'.⁵⁵ The image which Handke projects of himself in public betrays a degree of shyness quite inappropriate to the brazen publicity-seeker zealously represented by journalists and critics at the time.

On 8 June 1966, Handke's first drama, the 'Sprechstück' *Publikumsbeschimpfung*, an outright attack on the theatre of illusion, directed as part of 'Experimenta 1' for Frankfurt's 'Theater am Turm' by the young Klaus Peymann, proved an outstanding success. Inevitably it attracted a barrage of criticism from critics already opposed to the Handke phenomenon. The play was soon hailed by some, however, as the 'Theaterereignis des Jahres'.⁵⁶ Ironically, the critics who were labouring to dismiss Handke as a self-publicist and the creator of a succès-de-scandal, produced in their own articles the very publicity which they accused him of seeking. The range and depth of Handke's subsequent literary production has since disarmed critics who wanted to interpret the work of the young Austrian as a mere 'Skandal-Erfolg'.

Until 1966 Handke had been just one of a number of relatively unknown young Austrian authors, living and working in Graz, who were involved in the literary activities of the city's artists' association 'Forum Stadtpark' and had published work in its magazine *manuskripte*. Both 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte* had attracted interest and even some contributions from members of progressive literary circles in West Germany, including Enzensberger, Heißenbüttel, and Bense⁵⁷, but so far there had been no mention of a 'Grazer Gruppe'. Before the end of the summer semester 1966, Handke had left Graz without taking his final examinations in law at the university and moved to Düsseldorf with the firm intention of becoming a full-time author. The precise nature of Handke's early involvement with literary events in Graz remained

⁵⁵R. M., 'Ohrfeigen für das Lieblingskind', *Text + Kritik*, 24/24a (September 1978), pp. 115-131 (p. 117).

⁵⁶Rolf Krämer-Badoni, 'Die Sprache beim Wort genommen', in *Die Welt*, 11 June 1966.

⁵⁷Enzensberger in *m* 7; Heißenbüttel in *m* 13, 14/15; Bense in *m* 9, 11, 12, 13, 18, 22.

obscure and unknown to the vast majority of his critics until the mid-1970s. From the West German point of view he was simply a young Austrian who had 'arrived'. At home the meteoric launching of Handke's literary career brought encouragement and a feeling of confidence to other young authors with whom Handke had been associated in Graz. The public attention which he had attracted in the Federal Republic, and the continuing interest which his work aroused, played an essential role in bringing the existence of a lively, talented, highly productive group of authors in Graz to the attention of West German publishers, critics and theatre-producers. In the order of their publishing history, Handke was followed by Barbara Frischmuth (*Die Klosterschule*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, Spring 1968), Wolfgang Bauer (*Magic Afternoon*, first produced in Hanover, September 1968), G. F. Jonke (*Geometrischer Heimatroman*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, Spring 1969), Helmut Eisendle (*Walder oder Die stilisierte Entwicklung einer Neurose*, Munich: Hanser, 1972), Gerhard Roth (*die autobiographie des albert einstein*, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, Spring 1972), Alfred Kolleritsch (*Die Pffirsichtöter: ein seismographischer Roman*, Salzburg: Residenz, 1972). Others like Klaus Hoffer, Gunter Falk, Wilhelm Hengstler, and Reinhard P. Gruber were to follow. In particular, the role of the Suhrkamp Verlag in promoting these new Austrian works should not be overlooked. In his study of the position of Suhrkamp in relation to the publication and reception of contemporary German literature, Friedrich Voit concludes that the 'zunehmende Dominanz des Suhrkamp Verlags' makes its position comparable to that of S. Fischer in the first third of this century.⁵⁸ To be published by Suhrkamp certainly constituted a head-start.

Shortly after Handke's initial breakthrough and his departure from Graz, and well over a year before Bauer and Frischmuth celebrated their first major successes, the first public reference was made to a 'Grazer Gruppe'. In an enthusiastic response to the growing sense of solidarity and confidence amongst younger authors actually living in Graz (or, who like Handke and Frischmuth, had recently lived there), who had often participated in the readings and performances of 'Forum Stadtpark' and contributed regularly to *manuskripte*, Kolleritsch decided to devote a whole issue of the magazine to their work. In an announcement in *m* 18 towards the end of 1966, he inadvertently gave the idea of the 'Grazer Gruppe' a semi-official status which he soon came to regret. Oblivious to the literary-historical trap which he was about to spring on himself and his fellow 'Grazer', Kolleritsch listed under the heading 'Vorschau: manuskripte 19 bringen prosa der Grazer Gruppe', the following names: **Bauer, Falk, Frischmuth, Handke, Hengstler, Hoffer, Kolleritsch**. In invoking a group concept, Kolleritsch was not referring to any formally constituted group of which these writers considered themselves to be

⁵⁸'Verlage und deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur', in *DG* (1981), pp. 476-494, (p. 478).

members. Nor was he referring to any common formal features of their work. Kolleritsch had in mind the informal ties which linked them as authors living in Graz to the cultural endeavours of the literary wing of 'Forum Stadtpark' and its publication *manuskripte*. These two institutions, which formed the vital, external links between members of Graz's progressive literary community, will be considered in greater detail below.

Before publishing the 'Grazer Gruppe' issue early in 1967, Kolleritsch grasped that he was in danger of creating an impression of group cohesiveness and exclusivity which overstated the existing situation. After an exchange of letters with Ernst Jandl, he realised that such a group concept could endanger *manuskripte's* editorial policy of openness to new literary developments, not just in Graz but *throughout* the German-speaking region. Kolleritsch concluded that the group concept should be made relative and restricted to expressing 'ständige mitarbeit'⁵⁹ in the literary activities of 'Forum Stadtpark' and more or less regular publication in *manuskripte*: on no account should the term 'Grazer Gruppe' be thought of as referring to a closed group operating within the bounds of a concerted literary programme. The text of the corrective 'marginalie' which Kolleritsch published in *m* 19/1967 includes an explanation for the existence of a feeling of solidarity among the authors concerned and for the editor's desire to avoid the impression of a more formal type of group cohesion than was in fact the case. Kolleritsch now referred instead to the 'sogenannte Grazer Gruppe', a seemingly harmless, if somewhat paradoxical formulation which he declared to be a group '*die keine Gruppe sein will und sich doch aus einer Gruppe erklärt*'. The following passage from Kolleritsch's 'marginalie' bears directly on the problem of the group concept:

Da Namen meist mehr sind als bloße Wortmarken, war es vielleicht falsch, in der Nummer 18 der *manuskripte* in einer Vorankündigung von der Grazer Gruppe zu sprechen. Seit es im literarischen Bewußtsein den fixen Begriff der Wiener Gruppe gibt, könnte es leicht sein, daß man der Imitation bezichtigt wird. Das wollen wir aber gern vermeiden. Die Autoren der sogenannten Grazer Gruppe, die in diesem Heft nicht einmal vollständig vertreten sind, sind jene Autoren, die ohne thematischen und stilistischen Gleichklang sich im Forum Stadtpark in Graz gefunden haben und die in den *manuskripten* zum erstenmal veröffentlicht worden sind. Alle waren einmal, wenn auch mit wechselndem Engagement, mit dem Haus verbunden und sind bis heute der Zeitschrift des Hauses treu geblieben. Hier tauchte zum erstenmal der damals noch scheue Peter Handke auf, hier erfanden Bauer und Falk ihre Happy-art, mit der sie die Welt erobern wollten, hier lernten sie viele

⁵⁹'der gruppenbegriff soll eigentlich nur die ständige mitarbeit ausdrücken, kein programm darstellen': in an undated letter from Kolleritsch to Jandl: *Wiesmayr*, p. 16.

Autoren kennen, auch ihre Vermittler, denen sie es zum Teil verdanken, daß sie dem lokalen Kreis entronnen sind.

Kolleritsch's desire to avoid unwanted parallels between the so-called 'Grazer Gruppe' and the more formally constituted 'Wiener Gruppe' is made all the more comprehensible when one takes into consideration the links between individual participants in the 'Wiener Gruppe' and the literary scene of which 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte* formed an essential part. To Graz's younger progressive writers, the 'Wiener Gruppe' of Artmann, Bayer, Wiener and company, represented a vital connection with an alternative Austrian literary tradition. They were the heroic, pioneer-figures of Austria's only genuine, post-war literary avant-garde. Kolleritsch was anxious to promote this alternative tradition in *manuskripte*. Throughout the first ten years of *manuskripte* and 'Forum Stadtpark', the publication or performance of texts by the 'Wiener Gruppe' established a positive sense of historical continuity between Austria's restricted avant-garde movement of the 1950s and later developments in Graz.⁶⁰ But, as ready as they were to learn from them, the 'Grazer' were also anxious to establish their own identity. They were therefore sensitive to any suggestion that their work merely imitated models provided by the 'Wiener Gruppe'.

Kolleritsch's statement also points to a difference of type between the two groups which is worthy of further consideration. When he claims that the work of the 'so-called Grazer Gruppe' is without 'thematischen und stilistischen Gleichklang', he is contrasting it by implication with that of the 'Wiener Gruppe' who had worked together on a number of cooperative literary projects ('Gemeinschaftsarbeiten').⁶¹ While his corrective remarks appear definitive enough to be capable of preventing any further misunderstandings, it is possible to detect a certain reluctance on Kolleritsch's part to dispense altogether with the notion of some kind of positive literary group cohesion between himself and the Graz authors he names. It is arguable that Kolleritsch's attitude to the question of the 'sogenannte Grazer Gruppe' was as ambiguous as the formulation itself. On the one hand, as the editor of *manuskripte*, he was concerned to maintain the 'open' editorial policy of the magazine. Since 1960, *manuskripte* had received many of its important contributions from authors living in Vienna. In addition to the 'Wiener Gruppe', these included Ernst Jandl, Friederike Mayröcker, and Andreas Okopenko.

⁶⁰Wiesmayr has documented the public appearances of the 'Wiener Gruppe' in Graz between 1962 and 1968. In 1966 Artmann was resident in Graz for a year. See *Wiesmayr*, p. 13.

⁶¹For a list of these see *Die Wiener Gruppe: Achleitner, Artmann, Bayer, Rühm, Wiener: Texte, Gemeinschaftsarbeiten, Aktionen*, edited by Gerhard Rühm, (Hamburg, 1967).

Contributors from other centres included Raoul Hausmann, Franz Mon, and Ludwig Harig along with Enzensberger, Hamm, and Heißenbüttel. For this reason Kolleritsch was obliged to push the notion of the 'Grazer Gruppe' into the background. On the other hand, as one of the leading literary figures in Graz involved in a network of personal friendships and practical literary associations with the other authors he mentions, he was drawn to affirm the distinct identity of the 'Grazer' within the wider circle of authors represented in *manuskripte*.

Instead of eliminating once and for all the notion that there existed a 'Grazer Gruppe' of some kind, Kolleritsch's corrective 'marginalie' breathed into the idea of the 'so-called Grazer Gruppe' a mischievous conceptual half-life of its own. Undoubtedly bolstered by its appearance in print, the term 'Grazer Gruppe', with and without the qualifying 'sogenannte', soon established itself as a recurrent element in journalistic and critical discussions of literary events in Graz. The authors to whom Kolleritsch referred as the 'sogenannte Grazer Gruppe' had by 1966 become the dominant literary figures in Graz's 'Forum Stadtpark' and occupied a prominent position in subsequent issues of *manuskripte*.

In 1966 and 1967, a number of West German radio and television networks broadcast programmes and films documenting the literary activities of 'Forum Stadtpark'. In part this interest can be attributed to the effect of the media uproar over Handke's literary debut. Following in the wake of West German interest in Graz and thus remaining true to the predominant pattern of the group's reception in Austria, in 1967 the ORF commissioned the Austrian filmmaker, Ferry Radax, to make a film about the 'Grazer Gruppe' for its 'Nachtstudio' series. It is perhaps ultimately impossible to establish exactly how the term 'Grazer Gruppe' migrated from Graz to become a catch-phrase in the West German literary industry, but the broadcasting of these radio and television documentaries undoubtedly played a significant role, the more so as the circulation of *manuskripte* at that time did not exceed approximately 1,000 copies. What the chronology of events does establish is that even before Frischmuth and Bauer emerged into the limelight in West Germany in 1968, already somewhat independent of the historical reality behind it, the idea of the 'Grazer Gruppe' was abroad.

1.3.4 Inadequate Critical Definition of the 'Grazer Gruppe'

The uncovering and describing of the literary group constellations which characterise an era is an essential task for the literary historian. Inevitably, in the search for the literary paradigms which help to delineate a historical period

from what precedes or follows, certain distinctions between the works of individual authors are blurred. Works of literary history covering several decades and genres in the space of a single volume, however refined the historiographical method, need to be counterbalanced by the kind of corrective detail available only in studies of individual works and authors. Both approaches have their peculiar advantages. Both are necessary to the building of a fuller picture of literary developments over discrete intervals of time. It is, therefore, all the more disappointing to find literary historians, working so close in time to the sources of the Graz literary phenomenon, employing what the majority of readers will accept as historically verified terms of reference like the 'Grazer Gruppe' in an imprecise and misleading fashion. References to the 'Grazer' are further complicated after 1972 by the establishment of the 'Grazer Autorenversammlung' referred to earlier. The composition of this national literary organisation needs to be clarified before discussing the 'Grazer Gruppe'. A clear statement of the aims and objectives of the 'Grazer Autorenversammlung', together with an outline of the cultural and political debate conducted between this new association and Austria's official PEN-Club, is given in *manuskripte* by one of its founding members, Ernst Jandl. Jandl appends a list of the association's members which then numbered 165. He stresses that the name 'Grazer Autorenversammlung' refers neither to Graz's 'Forum Stadtpark', nor to the 'Grazer' or the 'Grazer Gruppe': 'Der Name bezeichnet einen gesamtösterreichischen Schriftstellerverein von regionalem und literarischem Pluralismus mit einer Mehrzahl von Zentren, geographisch wie künstlerisch' ('Was ist die Grazer Autorenversammlung?', *m* 58 1977/78, pp. 117-118, p. 118). Most of the Graz authors did in fact join this association, as will be seen, but this does not make all of its members 'Grazer' or participants in the 'Grazer Gruppe'.

In two widely available handbooks on the history of Austrian literature after 1945, the Austrian volume of *Kindlers Literaturgeschichte der Gegenwart* (1976) and Best and Wolfschütz's *Modern Austrian Writing* (1980), the work of Peter Handke, Gert Jonke, Klaus Hoffer, Alfred Kolleritsch, Michael Scharang, Gerhard Roth, and Helmut Eisendle is discussed under the loose general rubric of the 'Grazer Gruppe'.⁶² In both instances the term 'Grazer Gruppe' is employed without any systematic attempt to define the group concept or to indicate its historical limitations. The idea that there existed a real 'Grazer Gruppe' is taken over uncritically from existing popular discussion without regard for the problematical nature of the term's origins or the real nature of the 'group'. It is simply seized upon as a convenient method of bundling a complex series of literary events in Austria and West Germany into a tidy

⁶²*Modern Austrian Writing*, edited by Alan Best and Hans Wolfschütz, (London, 1980). See Hugh Rorrison, 'The "Grazer Gruppe"', Peter Handke and Wolfgang Bauer', pp. 252-266, and 'Biographical Notes: The "Grazer Gruppe"', pp. 281-285.

group concept which is then played off against other literary group formations like the 'Wiener Gruppe' and 'Gruppe 47'.⁶³

The literary researcher who proceeds on the basis of the information contained in such general literary histories to enquire directly or indirectly of the authors referred to, how and when they actually became 'members' of the 'Grazer Gruppe', will be received with an expression of annoyance or bemusement. He or she will be in a position of embarrassment similar to that in which a young Graz author, Peter Matejka, found himself when he wrote to Alfred Kolleritsch to enquire about membership in Graz's 'Forum Stadtpark' and asked how he might also become a member of the 'Grazer Gruppe'.⁶⁴ The exact text of Kolleritsch's reply is not on record, but it can safely be assumed that he answered along lines similar to those which he used in 1980, when he informed the present writer that the 'Grazer Gruppe' had never existed as a group in any formal sense, but was a way of referring to a loose circle of friends which had formed around the literary activities of 'Forum Stadtpark' and its house publication *manuskripte*.

Kolleritsch's explanation would appear to put an end to the concept of the 'Grazer Gruppe'. Why not simply dismiss it as one of the misleading epiphenomena which are sometimes produced in the writing of literary history? A closer examination of the pattern of the literary events which occurred in Graz after 1960 and a survey of their critical reception, however, indicates that the notion that there indeed existed some kind of 'Grazer Gruppe' is by no means historically unfounded. It does not, however, sanction the unqualified use of the label 'Grazer Gruppe'. From 1968 onwards literary symposiums, organised by Kolleritsch and others from the literary wing of 'Forum Stadtpark', became a regular feature of the 'Steirischer Herbst', Graz's widely celebrated annual 'Festival der Avantgarde'. Bauer was enjoying repeated stage successes with *Magic Afternoon* and *Change* throughout the German-speaking region. Jonke and Frischmuth were widely read. As early as 1969, the first doctoral dissertations on Handke's work were being written in Salzburg, Freiburg, and Berlin. In spite of this, in the early 1970s surprisingly little information was readily available on the events in Graz which had first given rise to 'Forum Stadtpark', the publication *manuskripte*, and the idea that there existed a

⁶³Hilde Spiel, for example, describes the 'Grazer Gruppe' with reference to 'Gruppe 47' as 'eine in der Tat späte Antwort Österreichs auf diesen Sturmtrupp in der Bundesrepublik': *KLGG*, 'Die zeitgenössische Literatur Österreichs', p. 95. Peter Laemmler takes issue with the poor literary-historical method and the many inaccuracies in this often consulted volume in 'Die österreichische Literatur kommt nur dem Namen nach vor', in *m* 63/1979, pp. 51-53.

⁶⁴From a letter by Matejka to Kolleritsch, 19 August 1968: cited in *Wiesmayr*, p. 97 (= 'Anmerkungen', no. 109).

'Grazer Gruppe'. Reviews of the period reveal a sketchy knowledge of the literary situation in Graz. It was not until 1975 that the first concerted effort was made to assemble a reliable body of information on the work of the 'Grazer' and their Austrian background. Again it was the West Germans who took the initiative. In 1975, Peter Laemmle and Jörg Drews edited for the Munich-based 'edition text + kritik', the volume *Wie die Grazer auszogen, die Literatur zu erobern: Texte, Porträts, Analysen und Dokumente junger österreichischer Autoren*.

The overall editorial conception displays an understandable uncertainty as to who should be counted amongst the 'Grazer' and who should not. By including articles on or texts by Bauer, Eisendle, Falk, Frischmuth, Handke, Jonke, Kolleritsch, and Roth, along with contributions by Reinhard P. Gruber and Alfred Paul Schmidt, it appears, however, to adhere largely to the loose definition of the 'Grazer' suggested by Kolleritsch in 1967. Only the inclusion of an article on Alois Brandstetter does not fit this pattern. The volume contains a number of articles which have since become standard critical sources on the literature of Graz. Of particular importance here is Manfred Mixner's historical outline of the origins of 'Forum Stadtpark', *manuskripte* and the 'Grazer Gruppe'. Mixner endeavoured to clear up the misunderstandings which by 1975 were already prevalent as to the nature of the group. Until the appearance of Wiesmayr's study in 1980, Mixner's essay remained the only reliable source of information on these events outside the early issues of *manuskripte* which were long out of print and accessible only to a few insiders.⁶⁵ Mixner's essay and Wiesmayr's later expansion on some of its main points helped to clarify some of the basic forces in Austrian cultural politics as they affected Graz from the late 1950s onwards. Important issues relating to the 'Grazer Gruppe' and 'Grazer Literatur', however, remained largely unresolved.

⁶⁵Issue I comprised a run of 100 copies, Issue 3, 800. In 1967 the edition was ca. 1000.

Initially the magazine was distributed to booksellers in Austria by supporters like Konrad Bayer and, after his death in 1964, by Ernst Jandl. Until 1972 *manuskripte* appeared three times a year. After 1972, in compliance with a 'Kulturministerium' regulation regarding eligibility for state support, *manuskripte* appeared quarterly. See Wiesmayr, p. 9.

1.3.5 Clarification of the Group Concept: An 'Informal Group'

Membership of 'Forum Stadtpark', frequent participation in its literary activities, and publication in *manuskripte* clearly provide the organisational basis on which any further literary-historical concepts of a 'Grazer Gruppe' or a 'Grazer Literatur' ultimately rest. To seek to clarify the notion of the so-called Graz Group beyond the point represented by these readily identifiable institutions, involves the consideration of criteria which affected the group's cohesion in a less immediately objective manner, as well as raising some methodological difficulties. Kolleritsch's 1967 description of the 'Grazer Gruppe' as a group 'die keine Gruppe sein will und sich doch aus einer Gruppe erklärt', expresses the ambiguous function which the group idea exercised for the authors themselves. Although between 1967 and the end of 1976, Kolleritsch, Bauer, Falk, Frischmuth, Handke, Hengstler, and Hoffer, and after 1970, Gruber, Eisendle, and Roth, variously took part in readings in Graz and elsewhere, publicised under the heading 'Grazer Gruppe' or simply (especially after 1970) the 'Grazer'⁶⁶, their public statements on the subject reveal their anxiety about being labelled as members of a cohesive literary group:

Man spricht so viel von der 'Grazer Gruppe'. ... Fühlen Sie sich als 'Gruppe'?

Wir sind Individuen. Untereinander sind wir recht verschieden - in literarischer und politischer Hinsicht. Es wäre ja auch unsinnig, von einer 'Suhrkamp Gruppe' zu sprechen. ...

Was verbindet Sie denn? Oder: Warum doch denn der Begriff 'Grazer Gruppe'?

Verbunden fühlen wir uns durch Kolleritschs *manuskripte*. Dort geben auch Leute wie Handke Erstdrucke - ohne Honorar übrigens. Die *manuskripte* aber vertreten weiß Gott keine bestimmte literarische Richtung. Also: die sogenannte 'Grazer Gruppe' steht und fällt mit ihrem Organ, mit den *manuskripten*. Wir zählen letzten Endes jeden zur Grazer Gruppe, der in den *manuskripten* groß geworden ist. ...

⁶⁶Compare Hilde Spiel: 'Im Oktober 1968 gab es eine Lesung der "Grazer Gruppe", die sich zum ersten Mal <sic!> in diesem Rahmen als solche formierte und damals aus Wolfgang Bauer, Wilhelm Hengstler, Klaus Hoffer, Ernst Jandl <sic!>, Alfred Kolleritsch, Peter Matejka, Hans Trummer und anderen bestand.' *KLGG* 'Die zeitgenössische Literatur Österreichs', p. 95.

Im übrigen ist das Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl via *manuskripte* doch recht groß. ... Die *manuskripte* und das Grazer 'Forum Stadtpark' haben Graz zum eigentlichen literarischen Kristallisationspunkt in Österreich gemacht.⁶⁷

In examining the pattern of group formation amongst the 'Grazer' it is useful here to invoke the distinction between formal and informal literary groups made by Helmut Kreuzer in his study of bohemian and avant-garde artists' groups since the late eighteenth-century.⁶⁸ Kreuzer's analysis of informal group structures provides constructive insights into the dynamics of group formation in Graz. At the centre of Kreuzer's literary-historical model of the informal group or circle ('informeller Kreis') is the concept of a strong, but flexible central structure - provided in this instance by 'Forum Stadtpark', *manuskripte*, and the personality of Kolleritsch himself - a dynamic inner circle or nucleus, from which some artists can be seen to depart (Jonke, Scharang), and to which others are added (Hengstler, Hoffer, Gruber, Eisendle, Roth). In terms of Kreuzer's model, the 'Grazer Gruppe' can be described as *the informal central core of the wider 'informelle Kreis' of 'Grazer Autoren'*:

Der informelle Kreis existiert durch die persönliche Teilnahme seiner Glieder aneinander, durch die ihm unmittelbar innewohnende Anziehungs- und Bindekraft. In formellen wie informellen Kreisen bildet oft (aber keineswegs immer) eine einzelne Persönlichkeit das Zentrum. ... Der Kreis bleibt offen für Verbündete; die Exklusivität gegenüber Andersdenkenden und der Zusammenhalt wächst jedoch mit dem Maß der Interaktion und Kooperation, vor allem aber mit dem Maß der Feindschaften und Angriffe, die die Aktivität der Gruppe hervorruft (Kreuzer, p. 170 & p. 172).

In Graz, it is Kolleritsch who has played the role of the coordinating personality of the group. His literary production is more modest in quantity than that of the other authors in the circle, but his contribution as an organiser of literary activities in 'Forum Stadtpark' and his tireless work as the editor of *manuskripte* for over two decades are indispensable links in the chain of events which led to the emergence of 'Grazer Literatur'.

Kreuzer notes that artists may participate in several circles at the same time. In Graz, an author belonging to the inner circle of the 'Grazer Gruppe' may also be seen to participate in the more general cultural activities of 'Forum Stadtpark' and the 'Grazer Autorenversammlung', both of which are formal,

⁶⁷Dieter Fringeli, 'Von Handke zu ... ?': Gespräch mit der 'Grazer Gruppe', *Basler Nachrichten*, 7 September 1976. Gruber, Roth, and Kolleritsch participated in the interview but individual speakers are not identified in the replies.

⁶⁸Helmut Kreuzer, *Die Boheme: Beiträge zu ihrer Beschreibung*, (Stuttgart, 1968).

legally constituted bodies. As the leading edge of the literary wing of 'Forum Stadtpark', the 'Grazer Gruppe' is part of a wider circle of formal and informal associations. At the formal end of the scale, both 'Forum Stadtpark' and the 'Grazer Autorenversammlung' represent the kind of formal associations which Kreuzer describes as being 'unbohemian' in character: 'Vereinshaft nennen wir eine Gruppe mit mehr oder weniger spezifizierten Funktionen, mit Statuten und formellen Rollenstrukturen, das heißt mit Ansätzen zu einer hierarchischen Bürokratisierung und einer objektiven Fixierung von Gruppennormen, unter Umständen in juristischer Form' (Kreuzer, p. 172). The younger literary wing of 'Forum Stadtpark', which especially in its early years as 'Studio der Jungen' was frequently in conflict with its parent organisation, in view of its informal and decidedly bohemian character, constitutes what Kreuzer terms a bohemian 'Gesinnungs- oder Aktionsgemeinschaft':

Legt sich ein Kreis auf ästhetische, weltanschauliche oder politische Normen fest, zu deren Durchsetzung er sich aktivistisch verbündet, nimmt er das Gepräge einer Gesinnungs- oder Aktionsgemeinschaft an, wobei wir unter Aktionsgemeinschaft einen Zusammenschluß verstehen, der ein spezielleres, konkretes, wirklich oder scheinbar rasch realisierbares Ziel verfolgt und daher u. U. relativ kurzfristig existiert, falls er sich nicht jeweils neue Ziele setzt. Bohemische Aktionsgemeinschaften planen und betreiben Galerien, Kabarette, Theater, Jazzbands, (Underground-) Filmprojekte, Reformkolonien und Boheme-'Kommunen', Außenseiter-Verlage, -Zeitungen, und -Zeitschriften; sie veranstalten Feste, Ausstellungen, Lesungen, Geldsammlungen, politische Demonstrationen usw. In der Regel handelt es sich um Gesinnungsgemeinschaften, teilweise ist jedoch das einigende Band nur die gemeinsame Negation des jeweils Bekämpften. Die Geselligkeit dieser Kreise ist nicht oder nicht nur Selbstzweck, sondern teilweise Mittel (Kreuzer pp. 171-172).

It will become clear that it is the 'Grazer Gruppe', whose participating authors emerged from the wider literary community in Graz to become 'Forum Stadtpark's' most widely received literary representatives, which most completely matches Kreuzer's definition of the informal group.

Kreuzer's group model also helps to clarify the distinction between the 'Wiener Gruppe' and the 'Grazer Gruppe' which Kolleritsch was so concerned to maintain. The essential difference is that the literary constellation of the 'Wiener Gruppe' functioned as a group of the more formal type. Although the bohemian aspects of the group were an obvious feature of its existence, its members also laid stress on a number of programmatically conceived aesthetic aims and actively worked together as a group on a number of cooperative literary projects - the 'Gemeinschaftsarbeiten'. A central document here is the

Acht-Punkte Proklamation des poetischen Aktes co-authored by Artmann and Bayer in 1953.⁶⁹ The reluctance of the authors identified as the 'Grazer Gruppe' to describe themselves as 'members' of a group, points to the group's more informal constitution and indicates that the name has more value as a descriptive term for outsiders than for the authors themselves. This was not the case with the 'Wiener Gruppe', where the name was freely used by Achleitner, Artmann, Bayer, Rühm, and Wiener in co-authored publications and to advertise public performances. The 'Wiener Gruppe' was also a closed group. The informal inner circle of the 'Grazer', on the other hand, remained open to newcomers by way of 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte*, and never conceived of itself as an exclusive literary community.

The insistence on individuality, on the absence of a common literary programme, reflects a genuine stylistic and thematic diversity in the work of the Graz authors. It also signifies a rejection of the notion that literature of any real worth could be produced by a group of authors working together on the basis of a pre-established programme. Handke, for example, proceeded in both his narrative and dramatic work from the assumption that the same literary methods could not be repeatedly applied, 'weil sie dann eine Manier sind, die nur scheinbar natürlich ist /nicht ... Wirklichkeit wird als Bild sichtbar, sondern beklemmend zeigt sich dabei die Verlogenheit einer sich als natürlich gebenden Literatur, die blind macht für die Wirklichkeit der Sätze, einer Literatur, die jeden Satz als naturgegebenen hinnimmt, als Bezeichnetes und nicht als Bezeichnendes, einer Literatur, die die Schwierigkeit beim Bezeichnen der Wirklichkeit mit keinem Wort überprüft'.⁷⁰ In distancing themselves from the idea of a politically committed literature, the Graz authors drew heavy fire from younger West German critics as well as from a minority in their own ranks, especially Scharang⁷¹ and Elfriede Jelinek. Handke and Kolleritsch, in particular, became prime targets for attacks from representatives of the New Left in West Germany and a handful of like-minded critics in Austria.

In Graz, the group dynamic played an important role in creating the profile of critical reception necessary to the initial breakthrough. The identification of individual authors with the group is not, however, seen as the goal. It is only a means, a form of mutual support to assist them in the pursuit of their individual literary careers. The concept of the author's function and the pattern of group formation resemble that commonly found in earlier avant-garde and bohemian literary circles. In contrast to the more programmatic group formations

⁶⁹Reproduced in the anthology, *Aufforderung zum Mißtrauen*, edited by O. Breicha and G. Fritsch, (Salzburg, 1967), pp. 243-244.

⁷⁰P. H., *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, p. 26 and p. 205.

⁷¹Together with other young, left-wing Austrian authors associated with the publication *Neues Forum*, including Lutz Holzinger, Fredrick Geyrhofer and Michael Springer, Scharang founded the 'Arbeitskreis der Literaturproduzenten' in 1971.

operating at the time in West Germany, in which traditional beliefs about the socio-political function of literature and the role of the intellectual were being called into question, the so-called 'Grazer Gruppe' formed around a loose collection of assumptions about literature based on more traditional, essentially bohemian notions of literary practice as effective opposition to the philistinism and rigid cultural conformity of an easily identifiable ruling middle-class. Kolleritsch's early 'marginalien' reveal his determination to oppose a cultural-political situation which was subject to frequent incursions by the defenders of a recidivist National Socialist ideology, and to emphasise his rejection of 'Austrianism' - the 'Mystifikation der Nationalliteratur'. From the outset, he regarded as a mistake the idea that cultural politics in Graz operated in terms of the same presuppositions held by their West German contemporaries: 'Eine Zeitschrift, die in München oder Berlin erscheint, muß anders vermitteln als in Graz. Graz liegt in der Steiermark, die Steiermark in Österreich, das heißt, in einem Raum, der immer mehr durch seine konservative Rezeptivität als durch literarische Spontaneität gewirkt hat' (m 7/1963, 'marginalie'). The consistent, common ideological component is a conscious anti-Fascism and an attack on 'Austrianism' as a specific Austrian literary tradition.

Kolleritsch was aware that techniques employed in the early 'Dunkelkammern', for example, had once served as the 'shock effects' of the historical avant-garde. Recourse to earlier practices of the Dadaists and Surrealists was an act of deliberate 'epigonism': 'Sicherlich ist das ein alter Hut, aber wir setzen ihn auf, wenn wir die Schläfer aufwecken'.⁷²

What was regarded as 'old hat' elsewhere, proved shocking enough in Graz where a concrete poem could still be compared to a Molotov cocktail. A strong sense of being repressed by retrogressive cultural forces and an active interest in new literary developments provided sufficient reason for the existence of a feeling of solidarity between the young Graz authors. The outline of the 'enemy' was obvious enough not to require an additional body of theory to justify an attack on its values. In the face of narrow definitions of what was properly to be regarded as literature from the conservative opposition in Graz, and, later in the 1960s, in reaction to predominantly West German demands for an overtly political literature, the 'Grazer' insisted on their right to determine for themselves what they would regard as 'literature'. Confronted by unacceptably explicit and limited definitions of what constituted 'das Literarische', they realised that to produce a positively-formulated, competing definition would be to fall into the very trap they were most anxious to avoid: the creation of a still-born literature based on an ideology which pretends to know everything in advance - a dead, pseudo-realism which prevents an open encounter with the changing conditions of existence. Stylistic and thematic variety, the

⁷²A. K. in a letter to Peter Jokostra, 7 April 1964, in *Wiesmayr*, p. 18.

freedom to choose and reject elements from traditional sources, the freedom to explore the parameters of their historical situation unhindered by pressure to adhere to a particular aesthetic programme or conform to a political party line - such oppositional, anti-systematic values represented the way forward for the 'Grazer', enabling them to break productively with negative aspects of tradition while avoiding the trap of a new and even more sterile conformity.

A marked bohemian element was also a notable characteristic of the Graz literary scene. Schmidt-Dengler in his short paper, 'Eine Avantgarde aus Graz', notes certain parallels with bohemian literary groups of the nineteenth century: 'Freilich ist es unrichtig, diese sogenannte "Grazer Gruppe" mit den traditionellen Formen der Boheme und des Dandyismus gleichzusetzen, aber es gibt doch eine Reihe von Gemeinsamkeiten. Antwortete die Boheme auf die bedrohende Verspießerung im 19. Jahrhundert, so reagierte in Österreich zu Beginn der sechziger Jahre die Boheme auf den immer bedrückender werdenden Glauben an die alleinseligmachende Kraft des wirtschaftlichen Fortschritts'.⁷³ This bohemianism can be attributed largely to the polarisation of conservative and progressive cultural and political forces in Graz. Schmidt-Dengler and Wiesmayr concur on this point. In the extreme opposition faced locally by the Graz authors, reactionary even by Austrian standards, Schmidt-Dengler sees the catalyst which led to their eventual breakthrough: 'Keine Harmonisierung war mit dem da zutage tretenden Bewußtsein möglich; die Atmosphäre erleichterte den Traditionsbruch' (p. 8). An interesting feature was the persistence in Graz of the appellation 'Dichter', albeit in a self-ironising way. Elsewhere the term had been replaced by more neutral labels like 'Autor' or 'Schriftsteller'. Wiesmayr sees this as part of the 'pseudobohemische Rituale' practised by the 'Grazer' to distinguish themselves from the 'Spießern': 'Die soziale Verflechtung mit dem öffentlichen Leben sicherte einerseits die Aufmerksamkeit des Publikums und zog andererseits das Bedürfnis nach Abgrenzung gegenüber dem Durchschnittsbürger nach sich' (Wiesmayr, p. 29). Schmidt-Dengler connects the use of the term to the emphasis on aesthetic autonomy amongst the young Graz authors but notes that even when used ironically as in Bauer and Gruber's deliberate 'Trivialisierung des Poetischen'⁷⁴ - 'Die Neigung für das vom Snob einst Verachtete, etwa Comics, oder für grob steirische Nahrungsmittel wie Krainer Würste, das Vergnügen, als "Dichta" Fußball zu spielen' - it was in danger of creating an 'allzu elitären Begriff von der Dichtung und vom Dichter':

... Nichts von Gleichschaltung mit den Lebensformen anderer Zeitgenossen, sondern deutliche Bekundung der Absicht, auch in der Öffentlichkeit als

⁷³W. S-D., 'Eine Avantgarde aus Graz', p. 13.

⁷⁴See, for example, Gruber, 'graz: die unheimliche literaturhauptstadt', in *m* 50/1975, pp. 139-141. Also in Laemmle and Drews, pp. 233-237.

Dichter verstanden zu werden. ... Nicht um zu provozieren, sondern um künstlerische Existenz vorzuleben, will sich der Dichter als öffentliche Figur begreifen (pp. 11-12).

The bohemian element in the 'Grazer Gruppe' becomes more comprehensible when examined in the light of the relations between individual authors and Styrian cultural institutions, including the local press.

1.3.6 The Elements of an Adequate Group Definition

Amongst those who have commented on the 'Grazer Gruppe', Mixner has the closest personal links with the authors themselves. This allows his definition to reflect an image of the group only slightly removed from the authors' own perceptions. Mixner argues that there is no common literary programme which might serve to link the members of this so-called group: the only point of coherence, he insists, is their adherence to the 'lockeren Freundeskreis der *manuskripte* Autoren' and their connection with 'Forum Stadtpark'.⁷⁵ From the evidence of their own statements, there is no reason to suppose that the authors concerned viewed their association with one another otherwise. But literary history does not stop at the self-image of the author. Seen in the perspective of a developing historical context, group effects are generated, both on a synchronic and diachronic scale, of which authors themselves are not aware. The existence of a shared historical and cultural context in Graz, membership of the same generation - those born around 1940 - a sense of common opposition to restrictive and politically compromising forms of literature, interest in, and defence of, an open-minded approach to the new - all these should make literary historians look for elements of unity in an apparent diversity of styles and suspect a polemic behind the denial of thematic connections.

There are several ways of defining the 'Grazer Gruppe'. These are not necessarily compatible with the authors' own understanding of the group, which stresses individuality and literary pluralism and tends to minimise shared features of their work. One definition can be seen in the journalistic use of the label 'Grazer Gruppe', which at times gives the impression that it is literally a school run by Alfred Kolleritsch with the aim of preparing young Austrian authors for the Suhrkamp entrance examination. Another, a polemical definition, emerges from the writings of literary critics like Priessnitz and Rausch, who sought to dismiss the work of the 'Grazer' as a politically unacceptable compromise with the principles of the more radical 'rein experimentelle

⁷⁵M. M., 'Ausbruch aus der Provinz', p. 24.

literatur', practised, they maintained, by members of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and others, including Heißenbüttel, Gomringer, and Mon.⁷⁶ An adequate definition must overcome the limitations of such definitions by taking into account the fact that the 'Grazer' and the group effect they generated are linked to several key factors in the production and reception of Austrian literature since 1960.

An important first step towards an adequate literary-historical group definition is to determine which of the many authors associated with 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte* it actually makes sense to refer to as participants in the 'sogenannte Grazer Gruppe'. Although it stresses the connection with 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte*, Mixner's definition proves unsatisfactory because it leaves the group so open that, with the growth of these two institutions in the 1970s, 'membership' expands to alarming proportions. The fact of publication in *manuskripte*, including as it does many Swiss and West German authors, is not sufficient reason for an author to be identified as one of the 'Grazer'. The founding of the 'Grazer Autorenversammlung' in 1973 brought further potential confusion. It included among its initial forty members not only members of 'Forum Stadtpark' and contributors to *manuskripte*, but a number of other Austrian authors who were not actively involved in the Graz literary scene. (Amongst others, Gustav Ernst and E. A. Richter of the 'Wespennest Kreis', the Vienna actionist, Hermann Nitsch, the psychiatrist, Leo Navratil, Elfriede Jelinek, Andreas Okopenko, Michael Springer, Peter Turrini, and Peter Weibl, as well as Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler and Walter Weiss who are better known as academics than as authors). In addition to membership of 'Forum Stadtpark' and publication in *manuskripte*, a further criterion is needed which restricts the otherwise ever-expanding circle of 'Grazer Autoren' to those authors whose work has been widely received by critics as 'Grazer Literatur'.

The pattern of critical reception has been such that the term 'Grazer Gruppe' serves best if it is used to identify those authors who live or have lived in Graz, whose work has been instrumental in making Graz's 'Forum Stadtpark', *manuskripte*, and the 'Steirischer Herbst' into internationally recognised vehicles for new literary developments. A temporal limit must also be set. That each of the 'Grazer Autoren' so defined owes much to literary events in Graz by way of initial stimulus and encouragement, and for the public exposure essential to the launching of his or her career, also helps to distinguish the 'Grazer' from other authors in the wider circle connected with events there. Authors of this wider circle (Georg Bures, Jürg Laederach, Gerhard Meier, and Urs Widmer, amongst others), may safely be described as belonging to the broader category of 'manuskripte-Autoren'. To refer to them as 'Grazer

⁷⁶Reinhard Priessnitz and Mechthild Rausch, 'tribut an die tradition: aspekte einer postexperimentellen literatur', in Laemmle and Drews, *Wie die Grazer auszogen, die Literatur zu erobern*, revised edition, (Munich, 1979), pp. 126-152.

Autoren', however, is to confuse the issue and overlook the fact that Graz provided neither the major forum nor the decisive formative influence in the shaping of their literary careers. Amongst the 'Grazer' who meet the above criteria, it is still necessary to distinguish between those who have been instrumental in contributing to the received profile of 'Grazer Literatur' and those whose work has attracted little attention outside Graz. An evaluative criterion is required. For the literary historian concerned to trace the growth of this 'Grazer Literatur' beyond the immediate level of anecdote and the local literary history of Graz, only the authors of those works which in the process of their critical reception established and maintained the idea of a new *literature of Graz*, can usefully be regarded as constituting the 'so-called Graz Group'.

The evidence of their critical reception, at the level of practical, journalistic, and academic criticism beyond the local horizon of Graz, acts as the decisive factor in determining which of the many members of 'Forum Stadtpark' and contributors to *manuskripte* helped establish the idea of 'Grazer Literatur' and therefore represent a distinctive 'Grazer Gruppe' of wider historical interest. It is impossible within the limits of the present study, which will concentrate on Gerhard Roth's achievement as a writer from Graz, to present this reception evidence in detail for all the Graz authors concerned. An indication of its general direction will, however, be given below.

Since the appearance of Mixner's historical outline in 1975, academic literary critics have acknowledged the difficulty of accurately defining the group, pointing to the wide circle of Austrian and other authors associated in various ways with 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte*. Useful evidence for the general pattern of reception is nonetheless present in the way reviewers and critics have repeatedly drawn their examples of 'Grazer Literatur' from the works of a much narrower and remarkably constant circle of Graz authors. The literary works, performances, and other activities most consistently referred to in reviews and tentative explorations of the 'Phänomen der "Grazer Gruppe"' (Schmidt-Dengler), are those of Kolleritsch (b. 1931), Handke (b. 1942), Bauer (b. 1941), Falk (1942-1984), Frischmuth (b. 1941), Hengstler (b. 1944), Hoffer (b. 1942), Jonke (b. 1946), Scharang (b. 1941), Gruber (b. 1947), Eisendle (b. 1939), and Roth (b. 1942). Other Graz authors referred to as being closely associated with this 'inner circle' from the point of view of their reception are the Graz dramatist Harald Sommer (b. 1935), Alfred Paul Schmidt (b. 1941), and Peter Matejka (b. 1949). The works of other Graz authors, Hans Trummer, Günter Cink, Expeditus Blümel, Franz Buchreiser, Bernard Hüttenegger, Peter Daniel Wolfkind, Wolfgang A. Golznig, Ernst Binder, and Franz Weinzettl, where they are known at all outside Graz, do not appear to have been received as products of the 'sogenannte Grazer Gruppe'.

The position of Jonke and Scharang is somewhat problematical. Jonke, because his association with Graz was brief: after ca. 1970 he appears to have

had no significant connection with 'Forum Stadtpark' or *manuskripte*; Scharang, because of his confrontation in 1969 with Kolleritsch (and Handke) over the editorial policy of *manuskripte*. Scharang criticised Kolleritsch's politically liberal policy of openness to new literary developments from a Marxist standpoint arguing that it hindered a direct 'Politisierung der Literatur'.⁷⁷ Although both Jonke and Scharang had considerable contact with developments in Graz in the 1960s and owed their initial breakthrough to their association with 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte*, they are not generally regarded as belonging after 1970 to the narrower group of the 'Grazer' proper.

In 1978, Mixner referred to Handke, Bauer, Falk, Frischmuth, Hoffer, and Kolleritsch as the 'eigentliche Kern der sogenannten "Grazer Gruppe"'.⁷⁸

In analysing the first decade of *manuskripte*, Wiesmayr draws on Kreuzer's model of the 'informelle Kreis' to identify the same authors, excluding for chronological reasons only Hoffer, as belonging to the *early* 'innere Kreis' of authors living in Graz around whom the wider circle later formed (p. 17). She does not, however, resolve the wider problem of membership beyond this initial constellation. The definition of the 'Grazer Gruppe' proposed in the present study includes the additional component of reception. It therefore proves more restrictive on the group's membership than that of Wiesmayr or Mixner, but the idea of an *expanding inner circle* remains a central consideration.

At the time of writing, when after nearly three decades 'Forum Stadtpark', *manuskripte*, and the 'Steirischer Herbst' are still vital centres of literary activity of great interest to Swiss and West German authors as well as to Austrians, it is impossible to set any final limit to the potential growth of this inner circle of 'Grazer Autoren'. The pattern of events in Graz over the decade from 1970 and their critical reception suggests, however, that Hoffer, Gruber, Roth, Eisendle, and Schmidt were among the last of the authors living in Graz to be drawn into the original, informal central core of the 'Grazer Gruppe'. This occurred early in the 1970s when the founding participants - Handke, Bauer, Frischmuth, Kolleritsch, (Jonke, Scharang) - were already established and opportunities for personal contact and positive literary exchange between the original 'Grazer' and later arrivals were beginning to reach the natural limits ordained by the pattern of existing friendships and the sense of solidarity prevailing between members of the founding generation. A similar pattern can be found in 'Gruppe 47'. Even though Roth, Hoffer, Eisendle, Gruber, and Schmidt are of the same generation as Bauer, Handke, and company, their literary careers did not begin, at least from the viewpoint of *published* works, until early in the second decade. Thus they appear as a *second wave* of the 'Grazer Gruppe' who contributed much to the consolidation of 'Grazer

⁷⁷See *m* 25, 26, 27 /1969.

⁷⁸M. M., 'Grazer Gruppe & Co.', p. 47.

Literatur' in the 1970s. Together with Bauer, Hengstler, and Kolleritsch, who unlike Falk, Frischmuth, and Handke, remained resident in Graz, Roth and the other authors of this second wave have become the leading 'Grazer Autoren' of the 1970s and 1980s.

For critical and literary-historical purposes, a temporal limit needs to be set to the application of the description 'participant in the so-called Graz Group' for each of the authors concerned. (The term 'participant' seems more appropriate than 'member' in the context of this informal group). In relation to the individual needs of the authors concerned and to cultural politics in Graz and the Second Republic, the function of this informal group has undergone considerable modification since 1960. In what might be described as the early 'heroic' stage in the development of 'Grazer Literatur' from 1960 until the initial breakthrough of Handke, Frischmuth, Bauer, Jonke, and Scharang towards the end of the decade, the authors' need for the 'cover' provided by the group as a united front is most marked. After the authors of this *first wave* have established their literary reputations on the open literary market and are already enjoying the benefit of firm publishers' contracts, their own direct dependence on the group lessens considerably. The prestige which they won is then transmitted back to the group, increasing the confidence of those not yet established, and providing an enhanced form of 'cover' to the authors of the emerging *second wave* who, as in the case of Roth, for example, received the mixed blessing of being compared initially by publishers and critics with authors of the established *first wave* especially Bauer and Handke. Individual 'Grazer' can thus be seen to participate for varying lengths of time in the inner circle which floats around the nucleus of 'Forum Stadtpark', *manuskripte*, and the *coordinating personality* of Kolleritsch. The critical validity and temporal applicability of the group concept can only be tested against the evidence of each case. Even though Handke, for example, has maintained strong personal links with others like Kolleritsch and has continued as a contributor to *manuskripte* to be one of the 'manuskripte-Autoren', it is by no means clear that it makes critical sense to speak of him after ca. 1970 as participating in the 'Grazer Gruppe', except, of course, retrospectively with regard to his roots in Graz. The same is true of Frischmuth, Jonke, and Scharang. In the case of others who have continued to live and work in Graz after the mid-1970s as members of a quasi-institutionalised avant-garde, the function of the group has also changed in accordance with their altered status as established authors.

The tendency of groups to reach the limits of their usefulness, their propensity for self-limitation, is a natural phenomenon evident in many instances of group formation in the history of literature. The process of dissolution can be seen at work in the breaking-up of the many literary groups of the twentieth century, in the various Expressionist, Dadaist, and Surrealist clubs and circles, or more recently in the 'Gruppe 47' and the 'Wiener Gruppe'. Although

personal bonds may be seen to persist, as in the case of the 'Wiener Gruppe' after the suicide of Konrad Bayer in 1964, the group itself, as a strategic alliance aimed at conquering for its participants a piece of cultural territory in the face of common opposition, breaks up having fulfilled (or failed to fulfil) its function. Kreuzer argues that only where a group sets itself new goals does it persist for a longer period (*Die Boheme*, p. 171). After attaining initial recognition in Graz and successfully breaking with the prevailing Austrian literary tradition, the authors of the 'Grazer Gruppe' appear so far to have been able to renew, on a firmer basis than before, their goal of opposition to negative, 'closed' forms of literary tradition. 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte* have become widely recognised literary institutions and have succeeded in decentralising the literary culture of the Second Republic. Where once the literary traffic between Vienna and Graz travelled almost exclusively in the direction of the capital, in the late 1960s it began to flow in the opposite direction as well. By the mid-1970s it had become clear even to the most ardent of cultural centralists that writings produced in Graz, or by authors who had begun their careers there, ranked amongst the very best literature produced in the Second Republic. In 1979, Schmidt-Dengler contended that the open, non-programmatic approach to literature of the 'Grazer' had produced 'radikale Änderungen' in Austrian literary culture:

... es wurden die Produktion und auch die Rezeption von Literatur stark von dem bestimmt, was in Graz geschah. ...

- Es wurde das, was in Österreich bisher als Literatur gegolten hatte, gründlich umgekrempelt. Die Wirkung wird zwar noch einige Zeit auf sich warten lassen, längst aber wird diese Literatur auch schon in Schulen weitergegeben. ...

- Die *manuskripte* gaben Anlaß zu vielen Analogiebildungen. Ihr Vorhandensein bewirkte, daß viele Zeitschriften oft mit Kontrastprogrammen zu den *manuskripten* ins Leben gerufen wurden. Es kam zur Bildung vieler lokaler Kulturzentren, neben Wien vor allem in Salzburg, Linz und Klagenfurt.

- Es ist der Grazer Initiative zu danken (wenn auch nicht ihr allein), daß Literatur einen anderen Stellenwert in Österreich hat als zuvor. ...

- Es gibt in der 'Zweiten Republik' keine literarische andere <sic> Zeitschrift, keine Gruppe von Literaten, die so lange durch- und zusammengehalten hat. ... Eine Zeitschrift, die in ihren Anfängen mit solcher Verve auf den Traditionsbruch setzte, wird nun zur traditionsreichsten des Lan-

des. Das sollte kein Anlaß zum Übermut sein, sondern ein wenig Selbstkritik stimulieren.⁷⁹

From Kolleritsch's perspective, his insistence in the introduction to the twentieth anniversary issue of *manuskripte* (m 69-70/1980) that the magazine was 'nie die Zeitschrift einer Gruppe, einer Ideologie, einer Tendenz', arises from a justifiable desire to assert the essential openness and tolerance of the 'Grazer'. The effect of the group's demonstrable cohesion and the positive critical reception of 'Grazer Literatur', however, point to a dynamic nucleus with a distinctive identity. The aesthetic features which help to unify 'Grazer Literatur' are the subject of the next section. For the literary historian, it is clear that the success of *manuskripte* and the critical breakthrough of 'Grazer Literatur' rest above all else on the work of the leading authors of that group which Kolleritsch himself labelled in 1966 as 'die sogenannte Grazer Gruppe'.

1.3.7 The Critical Breakthrough of the Graz Group

By 1970, literary critics were beginning to respond to the group effect arising from the recurrent appearance on the West German literary horizon of new and highly accomplished works by young Austrian authors from Graz. Before the emergence of Bauer, Frischmuth, and Jonke, commentators on Handke's work had made virtually no mention of his links with Graz. The legend of Handke's 'vertical take-off' ('Senkrechtstart') in 1966, created and perpetuated by a number of his West German critics in what is one of the most remarkable instances of a collective outbreak of jealousy in recent literary criticism,⁸⁰ succeeded for some time in obscuring both the extent and importance of his early literary activities in Graz. In 1970, shortly after the publication of *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, Horst-Dieter Ebert published a lengthy article in *Der Spiegel* which presented a more balanced portrait of Handke's literary development. For the first time, Handke's connection with 'Forum Stadtpark' and *manuskripte* is specifically referred to. Ebert registers the fact that other up-and-coming young Austrian authors are also associated with these literary institutions: 'Wie auch andere österreichische Nachwuchsautoren, so die Suhrkamp-Akquisition Barbara Frischmuth und der Dramatiker Wolfgang Bauer, zählte stud. jur. Handke in Graz zum 'Forum Stadtpark', einem besonders in den letzten Jahren talentträchtigen Künstler- und Literatenklüngel, in dessen Hauszeitschrift *manuskripte* die ersten Proben aus den *Hornissen* vor-

⁷⁹W. S.-D., 'Eine Avantgarde aus Graz', pp. 16-17.

⁸⁰See Rolf Michaelis, 'Ohrfeigen für das Lieblingskind': See Note 55 above.

abgedruckt wurden'.⁸¹ In reviews around this time of works by Frischmuth, Bauer, and Jonke, and, a little later by Eisendle, Gruber, Roth, and Kolleritsch, there is frequent reference to the 'Grazer', 'Grazer Autoren', the 'Grazer Gruppe', 'Forum Stadtpark', and *manuskripte*. As in Ebert's article, there is talk of 'österreichische Nachwuchsautoren' who have been 'discovered', principally by the Suhrkamp Verlag, in the 'Grazer Genie-Ecke', products of the 'Literaturküche Graz' or the 'Grazer Talente-Stall'.

An examination of the earliest reviews of Roth's work which appear between 1972 and 1975, for example, demonstrates the extent to which the new publications emanating from Graz had reinforced the notion that there existed some kind of positive group cohesion between the 'Grazer'. From the outset, Roth is clearly identified as one of the 'Grazer Autoren', yet another talented young Austrian author to appear 'aus dem Kreis um das Steirische Organ der Avantgarde "manuskripte"'⁸², 'einer der Autoren, die Alfred Kolleritsch, neben Wiener, Handke, Jonke, Matejka, Bauer, in den *manuskripten*, der wohl besten deutschsprachigen Literaturzeitschrift, gedruckt hat'.⁸³ The reviewer appends a comment which points to the role of Suhrkamp in bringing the work of a number of the 'Grazer' to the attention of a wider public than that available in their homeland: 'Im Suhrkamp Verlag weiß man das, aus Graz bezieht er wichtigen Autorennachwuchs!' Jörg Drews, a West German academic critic known for his publications on avant-garde and experimental literature, prefaces his first review of one of Roth's early works with a comment which stresses the links between Graz and Suhrkamp's literary programme: 'Der Suhrkamp Verlag hatte in der neuesten Genie-Ecke der deutschsprachigen Literatur, in der Grazer Gegend (geographisch gesehen) und im Umkreis der Autoren um die Zeitschrift 'manuskripte' (literarisch betrachtet), wieder eine Entdeckung gemacht; Gerhard Roth hieß der Mann des Jahrgangs 1942 ...'.⁸⁴

An observation made by another reviewer confirms that early in the 1970s, Graz had become firmly associated in the minds of commentators on contemporary literature with the appearance of things new and was a label which denoted a certain literary quality as well: 'Auch Roths Herkunft ist gut - er stammt aus der Literaturküche des Forum Stadtparks Graz, wo nicht nur Handke, sondern auch Barbara Frischmuth, Bauer, Jonke u. a. zur literarischen Gebrauchsfähigkeit gebracht wurden'.⁸⁵ Early in 1975, Roth is hailed by an

⁸¹'Unerschrocken naiv', *Der Spiegel*, 25 May 1970, pp. 174-190 (p. 180).

⁸²Anneliese Rieder, 'Die übliche verbale Kraftmeierei', *Arbeiter Zeitung* (Vienna), 13 August 1972.

⁸³Ulrich Raschke, 'Organisierte Sammelwut', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 7 October 1972.

⁸⁴Jörg Drews, 'Zur Ablenkung geht Künstel ins Kino', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3/4 February 1973.

⁸⁵Heinz F. Schafroth, 'Schädel voller Dinge', *Die Weltwoche*, 8 August 1973.

enthusiastic reviewer as 'das dritte literarische Wunderkind aus der Grazer Gruppe (nach Peter Handke and Wolfgang Bauer)'.⁸⁶

By 1975 awareness among literary critics of the phenomenon of the 'Grazer' had reached a stage where it was possible to make a statement like the following and remain on firm literary-historical ground:

Es ist nicht mehr zu übersehen, daß ein wesentlicher Teil der jüngeren deutschsprachigen Literatur seinen Ursprung in Österreich hat. Besonders reich an Talenten ist die Grazer Gegend, von Kennern liebevoll-ironisch die 'Grazer Genie-Ecke' genannt ... Die vom Grazer 'Forum Stadtpark' herausgegebene Zeitschrift 'manuskripte', in der ständig neue Autoren vorgestellt werden, gehört derzeit zu den auch in Deutschland meist beachteten Literaturzeitschriften. Grazer Autoren wie Handke, Gerhard Roth, Wolfgang Bauer stehen immer wieder im Mittelpunkt der literarischen Diskussion.⁸⁷

Although Roth freely acknowledges the importance which 'Forum Stadtpark', *manuskripte*, the 'Steirischer Herbst', and his personal associations with other 'Grazer Autoren' have had at various times for the development of his literary career, he shares with the other participants in this informal inner circle a dislike of the term 'Grazer Gruppe'. This aversion to being identified as one of the 'Grazer Gruppe' grew in the 1970s, largely as a form of self-defence against journalists and critics who continually over-interpreted the idea of informal group cohesion and persisted in looking for a literary collective with a formalised aesthetic and political programme. Such an aversion, however, does not indicate that the 'Grazer' were unaware that they shared a number of aesthetic and political values. The public denial of the 'group which was not a group' was an essential feature of the strategy of 'Grazer Literatur', an act of anarchic resistance to restricting categorisation and premature fossilisation at the hands of a gargantuan and highly specialised culture-industry, which, in the 1970s, was producing all manner of 'instant' histories even as history was being made. Resistance to advancing job-specialisation and product-standardisation, dominant characteristics of consumer societies, which from the 1960s were as prevalent in Austria as elsewhere, is a recurrent feature in works by the Graz authors.

What of the label itself? While striving to give full recognition to the authors' individual and collective reservations about the name, it appears both logical and of positive literary-historical value to retain the term 'Grazer Gruppe' (Graz Group), with or without the qualifying 'sogenannte'. It is a practical means of identifying those Austrian authors who have been

⁸⁶Walter Thaler, 'Der verfolgte Verfolger', *Salzburger Tagblatt*, 23 January 1975.

⁸⁷From the Publisher's foreword to Laemmle and Drews, *Wie die Grazer auszogen, die Literatur zu erobern*, (Munich, 1975).

instrumental in establishing and maintaining 'Forum Stadtpark', *manuskripte*, the literary section of 'Steirischer Herbst', and above all, their own published and performed works, as the focus of a new Austrian literature - 'Grazer Literatur'. The fact that the term has already found its way into a number of standard reference works means that to attempt to abolish it would meet with no more success than Kolleritsch's 'corrective' statement of 1967.

1.4 IS THERE A LITERATURE OF GRAZ?: THE AESTHETIC BASIS OF 'GRAZER LITERATUR'

1.4.1 Critical Approaches to 'Grazer Literatur'

Considered in terms of its organisational basis and the effects of a demonstrable group cohesion on its initial critical reception, the 'Grazer Gruppe' has been shown to possess a distinct literary-historical identity. This allows us to distinguish easily the 'Grazer' from the 'nicht Grazer' among the many contributors to *manuskripte*, but it is a form of literary identity derived from considerations largely external to the works themselves. The criteria are more biographical than literary-aesthetic. The question now arises whether this group cohesion is also asserted in the formal aesthetic construction of the literary works. Is it possible at the level of the text to discern features of a common literary landscape? Are these aesthetic features sufficiently different from other contemporary tendencies in German literature to enable critics to talk sensibly about a distinct 'Grazer Literatur'?

With few exceptions, reviewers and critics have tended to discuss individual works by Graz authors without much reflection on their Austrian origin. The matter of Graz is left substantially untouched. Isolated works have been treated in general surveys of contemporary Austrian or West German literature under such broad headings as 'Lyrik', 'Drama', or 'Gegenwartsroman', or subordinated to such recently emerged categories as 'neue Subjektivität', 'neue Innerlichkeit', 'konkrete Literatur', 'sprachkritische Literatur', 'feministische Literatur', or 'Arbeiterliteratur'. The anti-systematic, anti-programmatic literary intentions of the Graz Group have frequently been asserted by the authors themselves and have been amplified by the few critics who have attempted an assessment of the Graz phenomenon. Kolleritsch's 1967 insistence on the absence of a common literary style or theme within the group has been echoed in commentaries from Mixner's 1975 essay onwards: 'Und es sei nochmals hervorgehoben: nicht ein gemeinsames Programm, keine Ideologie, kein Stil, keine verwandte Thematik verbindet sie, sondern die Beziehung zum Forum Stadtpark, oder zur Zeitschrift "manuskripte"'.⁸⁸ Greiner also stresses the 'nahezu chaotische Vielfalt der Grazer Literatur' ... 'Die Grazer beharren auf der Andersartigkeit und Besonderheit von Literatur, die sich keinen Rastern einordnet'.⁸⁹ An anonymous reviewer concludes that 'die "Grazer Gruppe" kein einheitliches Gesicht hat, womit sie sich von der "Wiener Gruppe" unterscheidet'. Schmidt-Dengler takes a similar view: 'Thematische und stilistische Merkmale sind nicht verbindend'.⁹⁰ Yet the feeling persists that,

⁸⁸M. M., 'Ausbruch aus der Provinz', p. 24. See Note 43.

⁸⁹U. G., 'Der Tod des Nachsommers', p. 201 and p. 209.

⁹⁰W. S.-D., 'Eine Avantgarde aus Graz', p. 11.

despite this apparently 'almost chaotic variety', there exist in the work of the Graz authors shared aesthetic and thematic preoccupations which constitute the potentially distinctive features of their work. The authors' own rejection of the idea that their work displays any accord in matters of aesthetic practice, and the willingness of some critics to accept this at face-value, invite critical suspicion. As one of Bauer's characters remarks in the drama *Gespenster*, 'es gibt, obst es willst oder net ... es gibt in jeder Gruppe ... auch in ana Antigruppe ... a gewisses System'.⁹¹ A system of correspondences between the participants in a group which defines itself *negatively* in statements expressing opposition to an existing state of affairs, proves much more difficult of critical access, however, than a system which links the members of a group with positively formulated aims and objectives. Correspondences between works by the Graz Group are, for this reason, much more elusive than those which may be found, for example, between the works of authors belonging to West Germany's 'Werkkreis Literatur der Arbeitswelt'. The discussion of the general features of 'Grazer Literatur' which follows is exploratory. The scope of the present study does not allow comparison of numerous works by Graz authors. The primary aim is to establish a *set of working hypotheses* about the work of the 'Grazer Gruppe' which will be tested against the work of Gerhard Roth in Section II. The results of existing research into the matter of Graz are compared and evaluated. The outline of a more systematic approach to the distinguishing features of 'Grazer Literatur' is suggested.

The works of Handke, Bauer, Kolleritsch, Frischmuth, Roth, Hoffer and others of the Graz literary circle may be interpreted as innovative responses to major aesthetic issues of the period. Both directly and by implication, the Graz authors have provided in their works answers to key questions concerning the function of literature, the nature of language, and the relationship between analysis and expression in aesthetic production. They raise the question whether the purely 'experimental' in literature is necessarily 'progressive' for the individual or society. Viewed collectively their works form a substantial critique of many negative social and political tendencies in the Austrian Second Republic. The social criticism practised by the 'Grazer' has in common with the historical avant-garde the fact that it involves an attack on the literary and linguistic conventions whereby the prevailing social order is maintained. For this reason, the separation of thematic and stylistic concerns which a formal analysis of this kind inevitably produces, runs counter to the design of the works. The texts themselves are not intended as mere transportation devices for critical ideas. On the contrary, it is hoped that the reading process will itself directly induce a new experience of things. The works function as concrete demonstrations of a new consciousness *in action*.

⁹¹Wolfgang Bauer, *Gespenster*, dtv edition, (Munich, 1977), p. 24.

From the handful of pioneering essays in the field can be extracted a number of useful suggestions as to the formal characteristics of a hypothetical 'Literature of Graz'. In each case the critical approach is different and the categories selected remain largely tentative. With the exception of Priessnitz and Rausch, none of the critics referred to has attempted a categorical definition of 'Grazer Literatur'. Despite marked differences in their evaluation of the Graz literary achievement, there is nonetheless sufficient agreement as to which features are recurrent in the work of the group to warrant the pursuit of a more systematic definition: 'Denn zweifellos gibt es trotz aller Verschiedenheit etwas Gemeinsames'.⁹²

1.4.1.1 Negative Characteristics: a Literature of Opposition

Although chronologically not the first, Greiner's essay, 'Was heißt eigentlich Graz?', written as a reflection on the 1977 literary symposium, '10 Jahre Steirischer Herbst', provides the most useful general introduction to the problem of defining more precisely the distinguishing features of 'Grazer Literatur'. (Greiner uses the term as if it were already current). In the literary strategies adopted by individual Graz authors vis-a-vis the major cultural, political, and literary debates being conducted at the time, Greiner identifies three features which he describes as 'negative characteristics' ('negative Merkmale'). In a more schematic form than in Greiner's essay these are:

1) *Opposition* ('*Opposition*'): a) to the cultural conservatism and provincialism of Graz and the Austrian Second Republic, b) to traditional modes of narrative discourse, especially naive realism, and to a conventional literature which is content to fulfill, rather than to challenge reader expectations, and c) to the subordination of literature to politics which occurs when literary and political discourse are confused.

2) *Refusal* ('*Verweigerung*'): a) A refusal to remain bound to established systems of knowledge - scientific, political, psychological, religious - and the interpretive conventions of 'consensus reality', whether it concerns the reality of the self, or that of the external, social, historical, material world. b) The by-passing of social and political issues to concentrate on the exploration of the self. c) The entertainment of doubts about the conventional understanding of the relationship between language and reality.

⁹²U. G., 'Was heißt eigentlich Graz', in *Der Tod des Nachsommers*, pp. 199-210 (p. 203).

3) *Aversion to Literary Theory* ('*Theorieverzicht*'): This third characteristic of 'Grazer Literatur', the one most frequently singled out by critics caught up in the intense theorising of the 1960s, highlights the express aversion of the 'Grazer' to systematic theoretical reflection on the function of literature and the historical situation of the author. Although heavy attacks were being mounted in other quarters on the idea of the author as the autonomous creative subject, especially by Marxist- and Structuralist-orientated critics, in Graz the autonomy of art and the artist finds itself asserted as the right of authors to determine for themselves the scope and boundaries of literature. Theorising is avoided because in the hands of critics it tends to become normative.

Greiner attributes the lack of interest in theory to what he views as the 'Flucht- und Verweigerungscharakter der Grazer Literatur'. This stems from his conviction that the structure of Austrian society tends to make it extremely difficult for intellectuals to participate actively in the public sphere. The persistence in the public life of the Second Republic of authoritarian patterns of decision-making and of hierarchical power structures from earlier Imperial times has created, Greiner concludes elsewhere, 'einen Boden, auf dem die Phantasien, die irrealen Sehnsüchte und Ängste, die Fluchtwünsche wachsen'.⁹³ Austrian authors tend to feel that they can change nothing in the external social world, surrender easily to melancholy and resignation, and produce in their literature 'ein eigenes Reich, wo die Gesetze der Konvention nicht gelten' ('Was heißt eigentlich Graz?', p. 209). On the basis of this analysis of the social isolation inflicted on the representatives of a critical consciousness in Austria, Greiner explains the generally apolitical stance of 'Grazer Literatur'. Where active participation in public decision-making is blocked by the highly conservative nature of public institutions, opposition remains literary and individual: 'Solipsisten gelangen per definitionem zu keiner Solidarität' (ibid. p. 209). In the fact that the authorial self tends to be projected back on itself in Graz, Greiner also sees one of the major strengths of 'Grazer Literatur'. In contrast to the work of younger West German authors, who often subordinated aesthetic to political concerns, the Graz authors have concentrated all their creative powers on realising the cognitively distinct potential of the aesthetic mode.

Greiner's approach is open-minded but his preference for the overt participation of authors in public debates about literature and society leads him to exaggerate the escapist elements in 'Grazer Literatur'. He focuses more, for example, on what he takes to be the solipsism of Eisendle's novel *Jenseits der Vernunft oder Gespräche über den menschlichen Verstand* than he does on the

⁹³U. G., *Der Tod des Nachsommers*, p. 51.

author's attempts to break down the barriers between art and science. Eisendle challenges the reader to participate in the interpretation of meaning. He invites public criticism of these warring modes of discourse whose forgotten origins lie in earlier intersubjective 'exchanges between men in a community of interpretation'.⁹⁴ The fact that this challenge to public institutions is not taken up, reflects, according to Greiner, the isolation of the author as a specialist producer in post-war Austrian society, and the lameness of literary criticism in the Austrian media. But is a work which challenges assumptions about language on which both the scientific establishment and the naturalist/realist school of literature base their cognitive validity, in fact escapist? Such a view betrays the prejudices of the West German 'Kulturbetrieb', where critical reflection on language is overshadowed by the discussion of more obvious social and political concerns. As a literary editor of Hamburg's *Die Zeit* and former reviewer for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Greiner represents to some extent the values of this 'culture industry'.

Greiner's three categories of 'opposition', 'refusal', and 'aversion to literary theory', include considerations which are not all internal features of the literary works. The opposition of the 'Grazer' to negative forms of Austrian tradition, for example, is illustrated by a reference to the scandal which erupted when Bauer's drama *Gespenster* was staged during the 1975 'Steirischer Herbst'. Using these categories, Greiner contrasts strongly the apolitical stance of the Graz authors, their rejection of direct, ideologically-based portrayals of the social milieu, and their refusal to join in mainstream discussions on the writer and society, with the attitudes of West German contemporaries like Peter Schneider, Hans Christoph Buch, and Uwe Timm. Older, established figures like Böll, Frisch, Grass, Enzensberger, and Wellershof, all of whom have produced critical essays on the relationship between the writer and society, are also invoked by way of contrast. Greiner highlights, too, the differences in this respect between the Graz Group and fellow countrymen like Innerhofer, Scharang, and Wolfgruber, authors who express overt social or political commitment and who therefore correspond more closely to the dominant West German pattern. Greiner also briefly refers to the contrast with the prevailing literary modes to be found amongst authors of the German Democratic Republic, some of whom have attended literary symposiums of the 'Steirischer Herbst' in Graz. Already, in terms of Greiner's three working hypotheses, the work of the Graz authors begins to assume a profile distinct from the productions of any other identifiable group of writers after the early 1960s. It still remains, however, to establish criteria which bring us closer to the aesthetic structure of the works.

⁹⁴Paul Connerton, *The Tragedy of Enlightenment: an essay on the Frankfurt School*, (Cambridge, 1980), p. 137.

1.4.1.2 Experiment and Tradition: Positivist Critical Models

A reference to 'die Literatur der Grazer' appears in 1975, possibly for the first time in a formal critical context, in Priessnitz and Rausch's essay 'tribut an die tradition: aspekte einer postexperimentellen literatur'.⁹⁵ In the introduction to their highly polemical attack on the work of the 'Grazer', they admit that any critic wishing to define 'Grazer Literatur' faces a number of difficult questions about the literary-historical identity of the group - questions which the present study has endeavoured to answer - before dismissing such problems as irrelevant to their purpose. On the basis of their concept of 'pure' experimental literature referred to earlier, Priessnitz and Rausch then launch an attack on the early work of the Graz authors as *an unacceptable compromise between experiment and tradition*. They define the approach to literature adopted in Graz as 'post-experimental' - 'die postexperimentelle literatur ist, wie der name sagt, als reaktion auf die experimentelle literatur zu verstehen' (p. 126). The decision not to take account of the specifically Austrian cultural and political context of 'Grazer Literatur' constitutes a serious weakness in their argument: 'in jedem fall - motive sollen uns hier nicht interessieren - verraten die werke der postexperimentellen literatur die absicht, das experiment mit der tradition zu versöhnen, experimentelle problemstellungen und schreibweisen mit konventionellen literarischen formen und methoden zu verbinden' (p. 126). Compared and contrasted with paradigms of experimental literature taken largely from the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe', the early work of Bauer, Handke, Kolleritsch, Hengstler, Frischmuth, Jonke, and Roth is found guilty of 'lazy compromise' with the principles of 'reine experimentelle literatur'. Only Falk, Eisendle, and Hoffer are spared as exceptions to what Priessnitz and Rausch criticise as a reactionary backsliding into traditional approaches to literature with a strategic eye on the marketplace. The favourable reception of the other Graz authors is depicted as a sleight of hand whereby they exploited links with the 'Wiener Gruppe' and other genuine experimentalists to gain an undeserved reputation as an avant-garde. In terms of the absolute values Priessnitz and Rausch employ, the accusation is a serious one, but as will be demonstrated in the case of Roth, there is much evidence to refute it.

Underlying the missionary zeal of this assault on the Graz authors is a naive positivist belief in the cumulative historical progress of German literature. As if the historically recurrent elements of human experience are of no importance, Priessnitz and Rausch assert that the only literary works of positive social value are those which take account of the latest scientific investigations into connections between language, consciousness and reality. The argument rests on a view of the historical function of avant-garde groups similar to that advanced

⁹⁵See Note 76.

by Peter Bürger in his *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974).⁹⁶ Instead of working, as Bürger believes an avant-garde should, to dismantle the barriers between art and life, the Graz authors are accused of resurrecting the profitable 'spätbürgerliche Institution Kunst' out of materials and techniques shrewdly adapted from the experiments of true avant-gardists. The express opposition of the 'Grazer' to realist/naturalist modes of writing is caricatured as merely a calculated gesture in the direction of avant-gardism. Their resistance to exclusively neo-positivist views of language and society is dismissed as opportunism. The general distaste of the Graz authors for theoretical reflection is linked to an underlying pragmatism. The essay concludes by sternly reminding any Graz author who has not already put it down in disbelief, 'daß man mit den literarischen mitteln früherer perioden, die niemals nur mittel, sondern immer auch implizierte denkweisen sind (o. wiener), heute in erster linie trivialitäten zustande bringt, die das für literatur so notwendige interesse sukzessive ruinieren'. The fact that Handke's early work is almost exclusively preoccupied with this issue is entirely overlooked.

Although Priessnitz and Rausch exhibit the very compulsion to classify which caused Roth to coin the term 'Klassifizierungsideoten', it has an advantage for the present enquiry in that they concentrate on internal stylistic feature of the works discussed. The essay analyses the use in early examples of 'Grazer Literatur' of compositional techniques central to experimental literature. Montage, in particular, is singled out for discussion. Even if we cannot accept the excessively narrow perspective adopted by its authors, this essay nonetheless helps to establish the degree of importance which was given in Graz to existing experimental approaches to literature. It highlights a further potentially distinctive feature of 'Grazer Literatur'. The pattern of use to which Graz authors put aesthetic practices actually derived from, or closely related to, techniques characteristic of the more radical type of experimental literature is an important indicator of their historical position. The general reaction of the 'Grazer' to this experimental tendency and to the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe' in particular, will be discussed towards the end of this section. What Priessnitz and Rausch fail to make clear is that no other identifiable group of young authors writing in German after 1960 displays a comparable interest in establishing *a productive and publicly communicable dialogue between traditional and experimental literary modes*. The condemnation of this move by purist critics of the experimental school should not deter us from pursuing what the Graz authors and many other critics regard as a positive contribution to the aesthetic form and communicative potential of literature.

Wiesmayr's examination of the first decade of *manuskripte* leads her also to draw a number of tentative conclusions about the nature of 'Grazer Literatur'.

⁹⁶Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*, (Frankfurt/M, 1974).

Like Priessnitz and Rausch, she takes the view that a progressive literary aesthetic can only be based on an essentially positivist analysis of the relationship between society and artistic production. She maintains that in Graz the central presuppositions of a 'fortgeschrittene Ästhetik', including ideas concerning the autonomy of art, are not related to a 'Theorie der Gesamtgesellschaft'. The work of the Graz authors is therefore only apparently progressive in matters of art and politics. Wiesmayr is critical of the absence of an overt political dimension in *manuskripte* and of the failure to consistently publish only strictly avant-garde 'kommunikationsverweigernde Texte'. Writing after Greiner, Wiesmayr concurs with the notion that the Graz authors define their approach to literature negatively in terms of what they oppose: 'die Abgrenzung gegenüber dem als konservativ, traditional und provinziell eingeschätzten kulturellen Klima dominierte gegenüber positiven Zielbestimmungen' (p. 117). She criticises as the product of an outmoded consciousness, the conception of the artist's role prevalent in Graz, citing as examples Bauer's (ironic) public embrace of the stereotype of the bohemian 'Dichter' and Handke's defence of romantic concepts of art in such essays as 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms' and 'Die Literatur ist romantisch'. She accuses the 'Grazer' of a tendency to mystify the function of literature by 'failing' to take account of its 'reale Stellung im Produktionsprozeß': 'ihre politische Relevanz wird überschätzt, und es unterlaufen Vertauschungen von Begriffen der ästhetischen Innovation und des politischen Fortschritts' (p. 118). Wiesmayr's frequent references to Benjamin, Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Habermas clearly indicate that the 'newly emergent consciousness' which the Graz authors neglected to absorb is largely based on the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School.

The perspective adopted by Wiesmayr and earlier by Priessnitz and Rausch shows an excessive concern to relate actual literary practice to a more hypothetical than real total theory of art and society. To observers with reservations about recent Marxist approaches to literature and the pervasive 'scientisation' of critical method evident in the work of many younger Austrian and West German critics, such studies appear weighted against reaching positive conclusions about 'Grazer Literatur'. Relations between the Graz authors and Austrian 'experimentelle Autoren' like Artmann, Okopenko, Jandl, Mayröcker, and Wiener, and with West German 'konkrete Literaten' like Mon and Gomringer are much more friendly and cooperative than these critics suggest. The open-minded attitude in Graz to both tradition and experiment has helped to increase rather than decrease public awareness of even the more radical forms of experimentalism. Whether 'Grazer Literatur' is regarded as 'progressive' or 'reactionary' depends on the criteria chosen. Wiesmayr, Priessnitz and Rausch are all Austrians working in Austria, but their thinking is too strongly influenced by West German critical models to permit the positive

side of the Graz authors' 'Opposition', 'Verweigerung', and 'Theoriefeindlichkeit' to emerge.

Wiesmayr's conclusions about the success of the 'Grazer' are symptomatic of the theory-laden academic criticism of the 1970s. She views their 'Erfolg auf dem Markt' skeptically as the product of a calculated mediation between 'Elitekult und Popularisierungstendenzen, der Bevorzugung einer Literatur, die den Reiz des Experimentellen mit leichter Konsumierbarkeit vereint' (p. 118). The efforts of the Graz authors to adapt to their own expressive needs techniques derived from hermetic literary experiments accessible only to a handful of specialists, and their success in finding ways of communicating with a wider audience, are derided as an ethically suspect step in the direction of unreflective popular entertainment. As Handke's inquisition at the hands of similarly high-minded positivist/Marxist critics across the border demonstrated, for a young author to be successful was considered practically a crime.

To depict the early or even the later work of the 'Graz Group' as highly successful and easily consumable is an exaggeration. True, examples of 'Grazer Literatur' have been more widely received than the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe', except perhaps Artmann, and they are generally more accessible to non-specialist readers. The use made by the Graz authors of popular genre forms from 'Unterhaltungsliteratur' or of more classical modes like the 'Bildungsroman' or 'Sokratischer Dialog', however, challenge rather than reinforce established ideas about literature. Handke's adaptation of the thriller in *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, of the adventure story, the detective novel, and the 'Entwicklungsroman' in *Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied*, or Bauer's overtures to the 'Volkstheater' and 'Boulevardtheater', for example, affront conventional audience expectations in ways which no mere popularisers would risk. The balance between experimental concerns and the use of conventions which enhance the communicative range of these works is finely constructed. As existing critical studies of Jonke's *Geometrischer Heimatroman*, Frischmuth's *Die Klosterschule*, or Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück* have demonstrated, approximation to established conventions of narrative and genre serves only as the point of departure. Readers expecting a 'Heimatroman', autobiography, or biography narrated in linear form will be puzzled and frustrated. All three texts assume a close relationship between cognitive models of the world embodied in language as it is ordinarily used and the largely hidden conventions which govern personal and social behaviour. In a sense very close to that of Wittgenstein's proposition, 'Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt' (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.6.), these writers explore the way in which language tends to determine patterns of thought and behaviour. An adequate reading of these texts requires an understanding of at least the fundamental issues of the same 'Sprachkritik' which is central to 'experimentelle literatur'. Such works provide valuable

cognitive bridges between familiar naturalist/realist pictures of the world and the conceptually demanding perspectives on experience created in texts like those of Bayer or Wiener.

Wiesmayr concludes that a shared set of assumptions about aesthetic practice amongst the Graz Group can be discerned only as a rudimentary negative outline. Positive reasons for their decision to operate in the middle ground between radical experimentalism and established literary conventions remain largely unexamined. It is instead somewhat disparagingly attributed to the 'cultural lag' experienced in Graz: 'ihr Ruf als "Avantgarde" ist im Zusammenhang zu sehen mit einer retardierten literarischen Entwicklung und einem dementsprechenden ästhetischen Informationsdefizit. Der Schein der Progressivität stellt sich als Komplementärphänomen des konservativen Umfelds dar (p. 118)'. To evaluate what was achieved in Graz solely in terms of criteria applying to the most radical forms of experimental literature, employing a model of advanced technological society evolved in West Germany as a base, necessarily restricts the possibility of arriving at a more sympathetic view of 'Grazer Literatur'. Wiesmayr interprets the interaction between experiment and tradition in Graz largely in negative terms.

1.4.1.3 An Austrian Perspective on 'Grazer Literatur'

The three attempts to come to terms with the literature of Graz examined so far have all tended to subordinate the literary works to models of literary-critical thought which are primarily West German. Of the three, Greiner's essay is the most fair-minded. The only evaluation of 'Grazer Literatur' which establishes a genuinely Austrian perspective is Schmidt-Dengler's short paper, 'Eine Avantgarde aus Graz'. Schmidt-Dengler's conclusions about the effects which the work of the Graz Group has had on the pattern of Austrian literary production since the early 1960s have already been referred to. He readily acknowledges the line of criticism which reproaches the 'Grazer' for adopting apparently outmoded forms of avant-gardism, but he takes a positive view of their mediation between experiment and tradition. He pushes to one side competing theoretical definitions of the avant-garde and demonstrates that the Graz authors have nonetheless functioned in Austria as an effective literary avant-garde. He defends them against accusations that they retreated into a nineteenth-century type of bohemianism or dandyism. He points out that the assumption of artistic self-consciousness by the Graz authors, whether as an elite group of 'Dichter', or as a bohemian literary underground with leanings towards the pop-culture of the 1960s, has always been accompanied by ironic and self-deprecating gestures - 'In der linken Rocktasche Kierkegaard und in

der rechten ein Mickey-Mouse-Heft'.⁹⁷ Schmidt-Dengler restricts parallels between the 'Grazer' and early literary bohemian groups to a common opposition to the reductive materialism of the dominant middle-class. As in the two previous studies, evidence is produced which reinforces Greiner's characterisation of 'Grazer Literatur' in three negatively defined categories. This time, however, affirmative reasons are found for the avoidance of 'positive Zielbestimmungen'. He takes a sympathetic view of the extremely polarised cultural situation in which the Graz authors found themselves, especially before their initial break-through in 1967. In order to break the strangle-hold of 'Austrianism' and counter the resurgence of an Austrian fascist mentality, they were automatically cast in an oppositional role. For Schmidt-Dengler the single most important feature of 'Grazer Literatur' is that it represents a decisive break with established modes of writing in Austria. To object that many of the techniques employed to achieve this end had already been developed by even more radical experimentalists does not lessen the fact that the 'Grazer' were received as a literary avant-garde and thought of themselves as such.

The primary aim of the Graz authors was to develop for themselves a relatively autonomous aesthetic domain in which they could freely explore alternatives to traditional literary practice. The aesthetic pluralism expressed in the editorial principles of *manuskripte* results from the strategic avoidance of commitment to any particular aesthetic or political party-line. Finding themselves in a dense forest of competing ideas *about* literature, the 'Grazer' realised that the way forward did not lie in propagating more such theories but in making a clearing for themselves. Only in this way could their own ideas ever hope to come to light: 'Positionen werden negiert, Ansprüche werden zurückgenommen oder reduziert (p. 10)'. Schmidt-Dengler's acceptance that no binding literary doctrine emerges from the work of the group has been noted. He observes that, nonetheless, in the early years there appears an increasingly marked tendency towards convergence over aesthetic issues. He identifies as a general characteristic of 'Grazer Literatur' a strong interest in experimental literature and a critical attitude to language, loosely orientated around Wittgenstein's contributions to the ongoing 'Sprachkritik'. He denies, however, that this tendency functions as a wholly uniform or even obligatory feature of their work. Neither their experimental orientation, nor the literary-historical timing of their breakthrough can provide, in his opinion, an adequate explanation for their success in breaking with established literary modes. It is finally to an underlying anarchic impulse and 'die Konzeptlosigkeit, die eben jener Anarchie verpflichtet zu sein scheint (p. 16)' that he attributes the radical formative influence which their work has had on the reception and production of literature in Austria.

⁹⁷Wolfgang Bauer, *Kleine Zeitung* (Graz), 28 December 1965. (This quotation from W. Schmidt-Dengler, 'Eine Avantgarde aus Graz', p. 12).

Schmidt-Dengler does not elaborate further on the group's avoidance of an overt literary programme. But when we examine the type of argument directed against the 'Grazer' by Priessnitz and Rausch as just one instance, it is easy to see why these young authors were anxious to avoid becoming trapped in an endless web of discourse *about* literature. Theoretical issues threatened to absorb valuable creative energies: it seemed wiser to get on with writing. In the early 1960s, the Graz authors were engaged in bitter conflict with the defenders of Austrian traditionalism. After approximately 1964, they found themselves increasingly besieged from the opposite flank by theorists of the avant-garde - less often by practising authors than by their attendant critics. The collective response of the 'Grazer' was a strategic withdrawal from a mode of argument which undermined the foundations of the aesthetic domain they sought to establish:

Literatur, heißt es für *manuskripte*, ist das, was wir Literatur nennen: Literatur nennen wir das, für das wir Grund haben (glauben Grund zu haben), es Literatur zu nennen. *manuskripte* stellt Literatur vor. *manuskripte* stellt nicht das vor, von dem alle glauben, daß es Literatur sei: *manuskripte* stellt das vor, von dem wir glauben, daß nicht alle glauben, daß es Literatur ist. *manuskripte* stellt das vor, für das wir (und wir sind jeweils wir und wir) Grund haben, es Literatur zu nennen (*m* 13/1965, p. 1).

The remarkable emphasis on 'wir' in this statement points clearly to a shared set of aims. The style is anarchic, but it must be read in the context of embattled literary freedom. The goal - the unrestricted freedom to write and publish - is a positive one. It is not a deliberate neo-romantic mystification of the creative process. Like Handke's later essays, 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms' and 'Die Literatur ist romantisch', it asserts that the literature of the present cannot be defined in advance of its making. While insisting that literature is something 'made' ('das Geschriebene als Gemachtes': *Elfenbeinturm*, p. 204), it refuses to concede that good literature can be 'manufactured' ('Automatismus' and 'angewöhnte Natürlichkeit': *Elfenbeinturm*, p. 205). It may be argued against the Graz authors, as Wiesmayr has done, that they failed to take sufficient account of the implications which radical experimentalism held for the practice of literature, especially with regard to the relationship between language and experienced reality. But unlike some of the 'Wiener Gruppe', they did not aspire to become philosophers of language. What mattered was freedom of thought and expression, not whether their work contradicted theoretical principles.

At least since Camus's assertion in *L'homme revolte* (1951) of the heroic power of refusal, it is widely recognised that in the present age of mass technological society with its strong pressures to conform and consume,

positive human qualities are more likely to be manifested in acts of negation than in the affirmative embrace of systems and ideologies. An anarchic refusal to join in the general enthusiasm for the latest trend in politics, philosophy, art or religion has saved many creative thinkers from what sooner or later reveals itself as a grave error of judgement. Little more than a decade afterwards, a number of the authors and critics who attacked the Graz authors for their unwillingness to write in strict accordance with the game-rules of experimental or politically committed literature were already condemned to obscurity in comparison to the 'Grazer'. The repeated insistence of the Graz circle that no literature of lasting worth can be produced according to a preconceived system has been amply verified.

We are now several steps nearer to an adequate approach to the question of 'Grazer Literatur'. If we add to Greiner's three 'negative characteristics', Schmidt-Dengler's notion of an underlying anarchic impulse, which, given the cultural context of the Second Republic, is essentially a positive response to the need for growth, we have firm criteria for viewing the work of the Graz authors, not negatively as a literature of escape, but affirmatively as a literature of opposition. The forces which the literature of Graz opposes have already been suggested in outline - petrified Austrian traditionalism on the one hand, and on the other, the sacrifice of instinct, imagination, and insight to an overweening concern for analysis and theory. The fact that this latter tendency is not Austrian but West German in origin, indicates that an examination of works by Graz authors cannot justifiably be confined only to an account of their response to Austrian cultural issues. The negative reactions of the 'Grazer' to certain contemporary literary tendencies in West Germany - the phenomenon which some commentators attribute to 'cultural lag' despite the absence of any provincialism in the works - deserve serious critical attention. The sustained interest which a sophisticated section of the West German reading public has displayed in 'Grazer Literatur', especially in the work of Handke, Bauer, Frischmuth, Roth, Eisendle, and Hoffer, belies the notion that their work suffers from any appreciable cultural delay. Since the mid-1970s, works by the Graz authors have been increasingly promoted and reviewed in West Germany with little more than perfunctory mention of the authors' links with Graz or their Austrian background. If Graz or Austria is mentioned, it is usually done so affirmatively with reference to the positive contributions which Handke and other Austrians of his generation have made to German literature since the late 1960s. It is arguable that these younger Austrian authors have in fact since contributed much to the dominant tone of West German literary production. Far from remaining parochial or eccentrically Austrian, the work of the Graz Group has transcended national boundaries. The 'Grazer' do not exhibit the typical German tendency towards a pattern of conformity or revolt in matters concerning the external social sphere of their literary activities. In

rejecting West German moves to establish a binding public definition of the functions of a literary avant-garde, the Graz authors displayed a healthy spirit of independence supported by a strong but open-minded sense of community. It was the historical position of the Graz Group and not an underlying negativity which led them to adopt negation as their initial mode of literary self-consciousness. In opposing extremes of tradition at home and theories of radical literary practice abroad, the 'Grazer' affirmed the dialectical power of literature to generate a productive *tertium quid*, a middle ground which was neither stagnant nor unprofitably difficult to cultivate.

1.4.2 Linguistic Self-Consciousness: 'Grazer Literatur' and the Austrian Tradition of the 'Sprachkritik'

A further criterion may be added to the oppositional features of 'Grazer Literatur' discussed so far which, perhaps more than any other consideration, helps to establish its nature and historical position. The four critical essays discussed here all make some mention of the heightened awareness of language evident in the work of the Graz Group. Reference has already been made to the existence of positive links between the 'Grazer' and the particular form of literary self-consciousness associated with the predominantly Austrian tradition of the 'Sprachkritik'. It remains here to clarify the attitude of the Graz authors to language and thereby to the central concerns of that alternative Austrian literary tradition which Kolleritsch evoked in the early issues of *manuskripte*. The 'Wiener Gruppe' and Austrian authors who have followed closely related literary paths like Okopenko, Jandl, and Mayröcker, occupy a key position in the development of Austrian literature after 1945. It was the publication of their work side-by-side with texts by such a distinguished Austrian avant-garde predecessor as Raoul Hausmann in *manuskripte*, together with their actual appearances in Graz, which brought to the 'Grazer Gruppe' a strong sense of positive association with this alternative tradition. The reactions of individual 'Grazer' to the critical view of language embodied in the work of these experimentalists vary considerably. In general it can be said that all their work, especially their early experimentation, owes something to the radical re-evaluation of language which occurs in the work of these Austrian authors of the immediate post-war generation.

1.4.2.1 The 'Grazer Gruppe' and Austrian Avant-Garde Ideas on Language

An interview with Gerhard Roth conducted by the present writer in 1980 provides an informative view of the position of the Graz authors in relation to Austrian avant-garde ideas about language. Given the reluctance of the 'Grazer' to be drawn into theoretical discussions, Roth's observations constitute a valuable supplementary source. In response to a question about the historical situation of 'Grazer Literatur', Roth summarised the major influences on Austrian literary language as it was inherited and further developed by the Graz authors. He accounts for the concentration of Austria's avant-garde authors between ca. 1955 and 1970 on technically demanding literary forms of severely limited public appeal by pointing to the situation in which Austrian literature found itself after 1945 and the Nazi interregnum, Austria's second great political crisis of the twentieth century. The few Austrian authors of the period who did not attempt to seek refuge and meaning in Austria's past adopted an attitude to literature which to some extent can be paralleled with the 'Kahlschlag' approach adopted by West Germany's 'Gruppe 47', but which is based on a very different view of language and literary tradition:

Aus dieser zweiten großen politischen Erschütterung hat sich auch in Österreich eine längere Zeit hindurch eine geschichtslose und formale Literatur gebildet. In erster Linie die Wiener Gruppe, die stärker, z. B., vom Surrealismus, Dadaismus, Chelbnikow oder Majakowski beeinflusst war als von sonst irgendeiner österreichischen Tradition. Die Wiener Gruppe ... hat keine neue Literatur gegründet aber sie hat eine für unsere spezifische Situation in Österreich wichtige und hier erstmals auftretende Form von Literatur eingeführt. ... Dazu kam von der Wiener Gruppe die Entdeckung des Dialekts in den Mundartgedichten. Ich sehe in dieser Zeit den Ursprung der österreichischen Gegenwartsliteratur. Diese Beschäftigung mit der Literatur, zum Teil auf den *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* von Wittgenstein zurückgeführt, war in erster Linie eine intensive Auseinandersetzung mit der Sprache. D. h., die geschichtlichen, politischen Ereignisse sind in der wichtigsten österreichischen Gegenwartsliteratur nach 1945 zurückgestellt, bis wenig beachtet worden (Interview 1).

The intense preoccupation with language itself and the production by the 'Wiener Gruppe' and their associates of a 'geschichtslose und formale Literatur' is interpreted by Roth as the first, decisive stage in the development of a new Austrian literature. It would be wrong to see in the abandoning of traditional narrative forms a hermetic withdrawal from the public sphere altogether. The work of the 'Wiener Gruppe' frequently incorporated provo-

cative anti-fascist elements. But the social function of literature in the new Second Republic was regarded as being more honestly fulfilled by a radical confrontation with language as behaviour rather than by a more conventionally realistic treatment of social issues. The Austrian literary language which was now believed to be guilty of concealing more than it revealed about recent Austrian history led a shadowy half-life in the works of those writers of the Nazi era who continued to write after 1945. Elsewhere it was temporarily withdrawn from service. In the hands of the 'Wiener Gruppe' language was carried into the experimental workshop where it was broken down into its component parts to find out how it worked and if it could be reconstructed to achieve something other than to perpetuate the attitudes and misunderstandings of the past. Roth views the specialisation of this phase as an essential aspect of a linguistic cleansing process which had become an historical necessity. For young Austrian writers to continue to write as authors like Fritsch and Eisenreich were doing with a conventional understanding of literary form and language, appeared futile. Roth sees in the pioneering work of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and their associates, a positive response to the need for a new literary language appropriate to the changed historical circumstances of the Second Republic:

Diese Beschäftigung mit der Sprache, die zu ästhetisch hochwertigen Arbeiten geführt hat, hat auch gleichzeitig zu einer Reinigung der Sprache von einigen durch die politischen Ereignisse geschädigten Begriffen geführt. Es wurde wieder eine Dimension erarbeitet, in der man schriftstellerisch tätig sein könnte (Interview 1).

The immediate inheritors of this thoroughly revised Austrian literary language were the 'Grazer'. And it is here that Roth's historical account differs markedly from the interpretations of Priessnitz, Rausch, and Wiesmayr. Instead of seeing the work of the Graz authors as a return to conventional notions of literature after a period of radical experimentation, Roth maintains that from the perspective of Austria's overall literary development since 1945, the 'Grazer', in fact, took the process a stage further:

Die Grazer Autoren sind nach der sogenannten Wiener Gruppe um einen Schritt weiter gegangen. Sie haben im großen und ganzen das, was die Wiener Gruppe an Sprache erarbeitet hat, - an brauchbarer Autorensprache - begonnen, in eine neue Form des Erzählens umzusetzen. Ich teile nicht die Ansicht, daß diese Form des Erzählens, die jetzt in spezieller Weise von den Grazern gemacht wurde, etwas mit konventionellem Erzählen zu tun hat. Es hat in erster Linie mit der Rückgewinnung einer literaturinteressierten Literatur zu tun. Es ist der Neubeginn einer Beschreibung der öster-

reichischen Umwelt und der österreichischen Mentalität. Über verschiedene Werke hat sich diese Form langsam entwickelt, z. B. die Romane von Peter Handke oder Alfred Kolleritsch, Stücke von Wolfgang Bauer, Romane von Barbara Frischmuth - sie sind aus einer neuen Sprache entstanden und haben sich wieder existentiellen und geschichtlichen Problemen zugewendet (Interview 1).

Roth concludes that it is participation in this historical process in the course of his literary development which constitutes the specifically Austrian aspect of his work:

Das spezifisch Österreichische an meiner Literatur ist also dieser Entwicklungsprozeß, der von 1945 bis jetzt <1980> stattgefunden hat, d. h., die Beschäftigung mit sprachlichen Formen, wie in den früheren Arbeiten, Beschäftigung mit experimenteller Literatur - meine Form der Sprachreinigung sozusagen - und die Zuwendung zur Beschreibung meines Lebens in meiner Zeit nachdem ich mir die sprachlichen Mittel erarbeitet habe (Interview 1).

Positive reception of the critical approach to language espoused by Austria's small post-war literary avant-garde is then a further distinguishing feature of 'Grazer Literatur'. The pattern of literary development followed by individual 'Grazer' underlines the importance of first coming to terms with the new ideas about language. The early work of all the Graz authors reenacts, on a compressed time-scale, the radical linguistic experimentation which dominated the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and their immediate associates.

1.4.2.2 The Inheritance of the 'Wiener Gruppe': 'Sprachspiele' in Graz

Nowhere in the Western world have doubts about the relationship between language and reality been more pronounced than in Austria since the turn of the century. The scepticism displayed by the Graz authors towards commonly accepted ideas about language is not something which they simply took over from the 'Wiener Gruppe'. While the work of this earlier avant-garde group forms the most immediate and obvious link between Graz and the Austrian tradition of language scepticism, it is only one amongst several influences which bring to the work of the Graz authors an unusual degree of linguistic self-consciousness. Unravelling the history of ideas which impressed themselves on the 'Grazer' during the formative stages of their development is made more complicated by the fact that much of the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe' first reached the public after 1967 when the Graz authors had already begun to

consolidate their own position. It is certainly the case that the critical approaches to language adopted by both these groups have deeper historical roots in earlier European Modernist ideas and in the specifically Austrian 'Sprachkritik' which in its literary and philosophical branches forms a vital chapter in Austria's recent intellectual history. A clear illustration of the difficulties involved when literary critics try to establish the provenance of ideas about language operative in Graz is provided by the reception of Wittgenstein's ideas on the determining power of language amongst the Graz authors.

The first direct literary confrontation with Wittgenstein's thoughts on language takes place in the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe', especially in the writings of Bayer and Wiener who pursue the implications of his critique of immediacy. While Wittgenstein is by no means the only Austrian thinker whose ideas on language interested the 'Wiener Gruppe' - Oswald Wiener's labyrinthine novel, *Die Verbesserung von Mitteleuropa* (1969), for example, also includes passages from Mauthner, Kraus, Frege, and Carnap - he is nonetheless a consistent 'Begleitfigur' for their literary activities. By the time the Graz authors began to write in the early 1960s, the notion that language constitutes the fundamental mode of human orientation in the world was very much in the air and soon established itself as a basic working hypothesis of progressive literary consciousness in Austria.

What the 'Grazer' inherited from the tradition of the 'Sprachkritik' was the view that language as a highly organised form of human social behaviour exercises a determining effect on consciousness and behaviour. Any alteration in our use of language produces corresponding changes in our interpretation of the world. There is an intimate link between the way an individual uses language and that person's perception of him- or herself in relation to others. As the American pioneer of theoretical linguistics, Benjamin Lee Whorf, has argued, to participate in a language is to participate in a particular culture. Different languages, or the dialects of different groups of language users within a single language, can be related to differences in perception of external reality. Although he was concerned primarily with philosophical issues and not with the psychology or sociology of language, Wittgenstein gained a number of important insights into the cognitive and social functions of language. The most important of Wittgenstein's ideas about language which are taken up aesthetically and, in some instances, further developed by the Graz authors, are:

- 1) The notion from the *Tractatus* that 'the limits of my language' define the boundaries of 'my world';

2) The idea from Wittgenstein's later philosophy that what words mean is a function of the way they are used within a particular language community;

3) The related concept of the language-game ('Sprachspiel'): 'Und eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen' (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 19); 'Das Wort *Sprachspiel* soll hier hervorheben, daß das Sprechen der Sprache ein Teil ist einer Tätigkeit, oder einer Lebensform' (ibid, 23).

The interest of the Graz authors in these and related ideas about language is not abstract. What preoccupies them are the implications which these reflections hold for literary practice in the moral and aesthetic spheres. It is the fact that the Graz authors explore ways in which habits and conventions of language help to shape the life-world of the individual and society at large which allows us to speak of 'Grazer Literatur' as a 'development' of certain propositions advanced by Wittgenstein. Whether the authors concerned arrived at such ideas as a result of reading Wittgenstein first-hand, or through their more general reception of the 'Sprachkritik' in literary form in the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and others, does not lessen the importance of these three concepts of language in the formation and direction of their work.

The influence of Wittgenstein's key propositions about language on the literature of Graz is generally more indirect than direct, more aesthetic than rigorously philosophical but it must be noted that Kolleritsch, Falk, Eisendle, and Hoffer appear to have engaged in a first-hand study of Wittgenstein's philosophical texts. Of the three concepts referred to above, it is the idea of the 'Sprachspiel' which operates as a 'paradigm', first in the work of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and later in 'Grazer Literatur'. The 'Sprachspiel' concept can be seen to operate as an underlying structure in a number of the literary works. It helps to provide 'model problems and solutions' in the sense of the paradigms detected by Kuhn in his study of the structure of scientific revolutions.⁹⁸ Wittgenstein's own concept of the 'Sprachspiel' is broad. It embraces many forms of 'language' as complex acts in which the meaning of a word is apprehended in the role it plays in a particular language: 'Ich werde auch das Ganze: der Sprache und der Tätigkeiten, mit denen sie verwoben ist, das "Sprachspiel" nennen' (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 7). It is interesting to compare examples of Wittgenstein's 'language-games' with titles given by Graz authors to some of their early texts. In the left-hand column are 'language-games' included in Wittgenstein's examples of the many possible 'Sprachspiele' from Section 23 of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Facing these on the right are titles which relate closely to the 'Sprachspiel' concerned:

⁹⁸Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago, 1962).

Befehlen, und nach Befehlen handeln-
Beschreiben eines Gegenstands nach dem Ansehen, oder nach Messungen-

Standrecht (Handke)

Berichten eines Hergangs-
Eine Hypothese aufstellen und prüfen-

Geometrischer Heimatroman (Jonke)

Bauplätze (Hoffer)

Alles über Windmühlen (Gruber)

Augenzeugenbericht (Handke)

Walder oder Die stilisierte Entwicklung einer Neurose. Ein programmiertes Lehrbuch des Josef W. (Eisendle)

Handbuch zum ordentlichen Leben oder ein Testinstrument zur Prüfung der Anpassung an das Durchschnittsverfahren (Eisendle)

Bedingungen für einen Satz (Hoffer)

There are a number of other works by participants in the 'Grazer Gruppe' which closely reflect the 'Sprachspiel' concept. These include most of Handke's early works - the 'language-game' is given special prominence in dramatic works like *Kaspar* and *Der Ritt über den Bodensee* - Frischmuth, *Die Klosterschule*; Kolleritsch, *Die grüne Seite*; Hoffer, *Halbwegs: Bei den Bieresch 1* and *Der große Potlatsch: Bei den Bieresch 2*; Roth's early 'Kurzromane' and certain features of his later novels from *Landläufiger Tod* onwards.

The intellectual and creative power of the 'Sprachspiel' paradigm in its relation to 'Grazer Literatur' is well demonstrated in Handke's early work, but at the same time a note of caution is sounded for commentators who are in danger of blurring important distinctions between literature and philosophy. References to Wittgenstein occur frequently in critical discussions of Handke's early work. Handke is known to have read the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* while working on *Die Hornissen* in Graz and was clearly familiar with the more widely known propositions of the later *Philosophische Untersuchungen* as were many students at European universities in the 1960s. Perhaps because he considers such ideas to be part of his general education, publicly Handke has been curiously off-hand about the influence of Wittgenstein's ideas on his writing: 'Was ich gar nicht will: eine eigene Sprache erfinden, das finde ich idiotisch, das ist immer noch dieses Auftreten als Dichter. Ich möchte mich vielmehr *in der gegebenen Sprache* ausdrücken, und das ist das, was ich immer noch von Wittgenstein gelernt habe, *so wenig mich diese Philosophie*

interessiert: die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch'.⁹⁹ Compared to Hoffer, Falk, or Kolleritsch, his interest in Wittgenstein in fact appears to be of a general nature, centering on a recognition of the prime importance of ordinary language and the pervasive role of social convention in language behaviour. This in no way limits the aesthetic potential of these essential building-blocks of modern philosophy as catalysts for the literary exploration of the multiple connections between language and reality. Critics, however, are apt to exaggerate the importance of Wittgenstein as a direct influence on Handke's work up to and including *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* (1970). The stimuli for Handke's developing ideas on the relationship between language, consciousness, and social behaviour were in the main literary. His early reading of the French *nouveau roman*, for example, brought him into contact with ideas on language derived ultimately from the phenomenological tradition of Husserl and his followers. He was also interested in Russian Formalist thinkers, including Boris Eichenbaum whose essays he reviewed on the radio in Graz in 1965. The 'Sprechstück', *Kaspar*, was triggered originally by his reading of Anselm Feuerbach's *Kaspar Hauser*. Handke was fascinated by the way Kaspar's experience of language illustrated the relationship between order and disorder in human behaviour. Certainly, as Mixner has revealed, Wittgenstein's notion from the *Tractatus* that 'Der Satz ist ein Bild der Wirklichkeit. Der Satz ist ein Modell der Wirklichkeit, so wie wir sie uns denken' (*Tractatus* 4.01), is behind Handke's use of the terms 'Satz' and 'Modell' in his commentary on this play which demonstrates 'wie jemand durch Sprechen zum Sprechen gebracht werden kann'. But *Kaspar* is far more than a stage adaptation of philosophical ideas about language. The play is, in effect, a parable about the way language conditions our experience of the world and of ourselves. It is presented in the style of a myth about language which is of Handke's own making. The link with Wittgenstein is helpful but it does not constitute an adequate account of what Handke achieves through the play. An examination of works by others of the Graz Group in this respect reveals a similar pattern.

Walter Weiss argues that Wittgenstein's reflections on language are an important reference point for many contemporary authors writing in German: 'Wittgensteins oft zitierter Satz aus dem *Tractatus*: "Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt" "schlägt" nicht nur den "Grundton an, auf den die Philosophie unserer Zeit gestimmt ist", sondern ebenso einen

⁹⁹'Die Ausbeutung des Bewußtseins', interview with P. H. by Christian Linder, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 January 1973, p. 30. Reprinted in: C. L., *Schreiben und Leben*, (Köln 1974).

Grundton der Gegenwartsliteratur'.¹⁰⁰ This is no more true than in Austria amongst the Graz authors referred to above and the members of the 'Wiener Gruppe' with whom some of the 'Grazer' personally associated. In terms of the oppositional nature of 'Grazer Literatur', Wittgenstein also fulfils a symbolic function as a kind of 'ancestor', a philosophical avant-gardist, and certainly as an Austrian figure embodying a positive and potentially liberating honesty and intellectual freedom. Wittgenstein's emblematic importance for 'Grazer Literatur' is highlighted in a playful and ironic fashion in Jürg Laederach's farce, *Wittgenstein in Graz: Lustspiel*, (m 63/1979, pp. 4-22).

In conclusion it must be emphasised that, alongside the oppositional features of 'Grazer Literatur' as outlined by Greiner, and Schmidt-Dengler's 'grundlegende Anarchie', it is the positive reception by the Graz authors of a specifically Austrian tradition of linguistic self-consciousness which makes it possible to talk sensibly about a distinct literature of Graz.

¹⁰⁰W. W., 'Zur Thematisierung der Sprache in der Literatur der Gegenwart', in *Festschrift für Hans Eggers zum 65. Geburtstag: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, (Tübingen, 1972), pp. 669-693 (pp. 673-674).