

Preface

The Novel in Anglo-German Context. Cultural Cross-Currents and Affinities (Der Roman in englisch-deutscher Perspektive. Kulturelle Berührungspunkte zwischen englisch- und deutschsprachigen Ländern) was the title of an international conference held at the University of Leeds from 15 to 17 September 1997. The cultural cross-fertilisation between fiction written in English and fiction written in German was the focus of our two-day meeting in the pleasant surroundings of Oxley Hall. British, Irish, German, Swiss and Austrian novelists were discussed by conference participants from Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Ireland, Britain and Portugal, and the ideas reflected in the topics of the papers delivered at the symposium convey the scope and potential of different types of Anglo-German affinities and cross-currents in fictional writing from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. The authors of the essays included in this volume not only elaborate on the reception of a wide range of writers and their works in the respectively “other” country or compared common themes in novels written in English and novels written in German, but they also branch out into the exploration of translations and translation strategies, rewritings, the portrayal of cultural characteristics and stereotypes, stylistic and generic differences in the concept of fiction in different cultural environments, the special context of exile writing, as well as the place of the novel in the syllabus of British and German secondary school teaching.

The picture which emerged during the symposium is a multi-faceted web of variations on a common theme and was further enriched through the readings of two contemporary Swiss novelists, Gabrielle Alioth and Peter Zeindler. Gabrielle Alioth, who lives in the Republic of Ireland, presented extracts from her novel *Die Arche der Frauen* and commented lucidly on some of the challenges inherent in the process of leaving one’s own native traditions and settling in the environment of a different culture. This topic, which is also seminal to her novels *Der Narr* and *Wie ein kostbarer Stein*, plays a crucial role in her own development as a writer. Peter Zeindler is best known as an author of detective fiction besides radio and television scripts. Some of his novels are partially set in Britain, and he even decided after his stay in Leeds to use our conference as the background scenario for his short story “Elfie, das Biest”, which has been published in *Amoklauf im Audimax* (Munich: Rowohlt, 1998).

We are fortunate that the “bilingual” nature of our symposium could be reflected in the pages of this volume. German essays are preceded by an English abstract while English essays have a short summary in German, which will make it easy for the reader to gain an overview of the ideas explored in each paper. What is more, I have largely made the attempt to preserve the contributors’ individual stylistic conventions. For general guidance in the editorial process I am grateful to the series editor Alberto Martino (Vienna) and to Norbert Bachleitner (Vienna), who answered my queries with

prompt and unstinting diligence and provided invaluable advice on the production of camera-ready pages. Michael Beddow (Leeds) gave generously of his time and IT experience, when text files had to be converted from thirty-one different discs; as a result of his efforts I could edit and print with ease at the work station in my office. For the design of the cover page I should like to acknowledge the financial assistance I have received from the Department of German at the University of Leeds, which allowed me to choose portraits of some of the novelists represented in this volume, and for help with the proof-reading my thanks go to Christine Devine and Fred Bridgham.

The conference itself was made possible through the generosity of the University of Leeds, the Austrian Cultural Institute and Pro Helvetia (Arts Council of Switzerland), and I owe a great debt of thanks to these bodies for their forthcoming support. Finally, I am grateful to my colleagues Fred Bridgham, Richard Byrn and Helen Chambers, as well as to our departmental secretary Lesley Nutt, for their advice, help and encouragement during the organisation of our symposium from which the ideas developed on the following pages originate.

Susanne Stark