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I came to U.T. Austin in 1966 as a University of Oxford D.Phil. (1954), after ten years of teaching at King's College, University of London; I had previously spent the academic year 1961-2 here on a visit. During my thirty years in the Department of Germanic Languages I have also taught regularly in the Comparative Literature Program, which opened in 1974. My fields of study and teaching (undergraduate and graduate) have been mostly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, poetry and narrative prose, formerly with a focus on individual writers, e.g. Hölderlin, Mörike, Rilke, Trakl, Kafka, Robert Walser, as well as on specific movements, e.g. Expressionism, Dada. In Comparative Literature I have regularly taught a graduate genre-oriented course on poetry (Lyric, across four or five centuries and languages), and a topics course on Symbolism. I have also taught, in Comparative Literature, a graduate course on "Short Prose," which, somewhat modified, has been extremely popular with students in the undergraduate Plan II Program.

My activities, I should say, include writing: eight books of poems, three of short prose, published between 1962 and 1997; also translating -- about fifteen books, poetry, novels, essays, letters. Two books of essays have appeared (1978 and 1983) and a third is due in 1998.

The few honors I have earned are: the Sir Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize (for poetry), 1964; a Guggenheim Poetry Fellowship (1974-75); an NEH Poetry Fellowship (1980); the Tieck-Schlegel Translation Prize (1986); the Max Geilinger-Stiftung Prize for Anglo-Swiss Cultural Relations (1993).

Now close to retirement (in 1998) I recognize how little I have contributed to the professional aspect of German studies in the USA. People know me as a poet and translator, and they ask: "Isn't he at Texas or somewhere?" Well, at least I have supervised a dozen or more Ph.D.s and contributed counsel to a dozen others (including those in Comparative Literature, working with Chinese and Middle Eastern students). I have also supervised numerous M.A. theses. Some of my former students have blossomed in their academic fields, others have valiantly held the line of advance in those essential institutions -- the smaller universities, the leaven (if not the heaven) of the provinces.

What I would stress in retrospect is the stability and professionalism of our department: we have never pushed a particular (philosophical or ideological) line of study, but have attracted excellent students, all the same. They have benefited not only from our teachers of literature, but also from the tenaciously developed and well-organized "pedagogical" aspect -- the learning and teaching of language, not only in German areas, but in Dutch, Scandinavian, and Yiddish. Our extra-curricular aspect is also attractive -- the annual play, the "Stammtisch," the films. Quite apart from diverse course-offerings (now encompassing business German, "culture" and social history), students can enjoy the magnificent and efficient Perry-Castañeda Library. For graduate research, the PCL holdings are second to few (with their very special collections). The Harry Ransom Center has special collections envied the world over, notably in the field of twentieth century authors. Those libraries, like the department, are equipped with the latest electronic aids, available to graduates and undergraduates alike.

Since I came to Austin, the city has mushroomed, There are no lonely cowboys downtown in the nighttime now. We have distinctive local theater companies, ballet companies, and more varieties of music (on-campus too) than most strangers could imagine. Austin is a flourishing city and the campus is only one oasis among many in which bold brains and high spirits can congregate. The surrounding country is not as people from afar imagine it: lakes, hills, trees (also in the city), creeks, and animals make this, for now, an environment to remind you that you inhabit a planet.

-statement from 2000
