

Austrian avant-garde literature is nowadays considered an integral part of German literary history. Focusing on the avant-garde's early stage of the 1960s, the thesis seeks to look into (a) the conditions which gave rise to the progressive literature in the Austria of that time, and (b) its concrete manifestations in the works of the young authors.

The opening part explains the origins of such a radical approach to form and content across literary genres. After 1945, Austrian culture and arts did not face the uncertain choice of literature in Germany, where another parting of the ways came in 1947, with the fundamentally different approaches between the West and the East. In Austria the initial debate was more efficient: the official policies clearly aimed at re-establishment of the modern and stable values as presented by the Austrian interwar great story-tellers such as Robert Musil and Hermann Broch. These efforts, however, were soon to become counterproductive. The conservative, and cumbersomely obsolete policies of the grand coalition between the social democratic SPÖ party and the newly established ÖVP party failed to provide fertile land for young authors, who grew up in the 1960s. It was these authors in particular who felt that the cultural and political atmosphere was extremely rigid, and that the literature could not fulfil their expectations. Another factor important to them was the still-prevailing negative fallout from World War II. People discredited by the war, among them those once welcoming the "Anschluss", or annexation of Austria to the Nazi Germany, now easily engaged in the political and cultural life. The political circumstances made it impossible for any literary experiment in Austria to win official support.

For this reason, the avant-garde with the 1950s "Wiener Gruppe" around Hans Carl Artmann, and more importantly with the 1960s "Grazer Gruppe" had a vigorous start and an unflinching urge to break through and provoke, often to absurdity.

Following the rather isolated initial attempts at progressive literature in the 1950s, the avant-garde grew into a mighty and confident tool for the experimental authors of the 1960s and early 1970s. Surprisingly, it was not Vienna but Graz, Styria, that became their capital.