

Werner SCHRÖDER (1914-2010)

At the age of 96, Werner Schröder passed away on July 11, 2010, after a brief illness. He belonged, together with Friedrich Ohly (1914-1996) and Kurt Ruh (1914-2002), to a small group of German medievalists who dominated to a considerable extent the postwar history of philological studies in the field of medieval German. He had supervised forty-five doctoral theses, many of them on Arthurian subjects.

Werner Schröder studied history, German and English philology at the University of Halle. In his doctoral dissertation of 1938 he treated historical subject-matter; for his 'Habilitation', his post-doctoral dissertation, however, he turned, under the influence of Georg Baesecke (1876-1951), to German philology and to research on Old High German glosses, the special domain of Baesecke. He was drafted right at the beginning of World War II and spent the whole war as a medical officer in Norway and in the Balkans. After eighteen months as a prisoner of war in Yugoslavia he was released because of bad health; having recovered, he worked as an archivist from 1948 to 1953. After his habilitation in 1950 the SED regime denied him the right to teach at a university for political reasons. Although he was allowed back to university teaching in 1952 the regime prevented him from becoming the successor of Theodor Frings in Leipzig. When the regime's harassment became more and more intolerable, he fled the GDR in 1959, after he had received two offers, simultaneously, of chairs in Mayence and Marburg. He opted for Marburg and stayed there until he retired in 1992, although he had offers of chairs from Göttingen (1964) and Graz (1982).

In Halle his work had concentrated on historical linguistics (Gothic, Old High German); in Marburg he turned to Middle High German language and literature. Here he initiated a number of successful research projects, among them the preparation of his monumental edition of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm* (1978). He published a great number of studies on classical medieval literature, for example on the works of Heinrich von Veldeke, Hartmann von Aue, Gottfried von Straßburg and in particular Wolfram von Eschenbach (for his collected essays on Wolfram cf. *BBSIA* XLII, 1990, 578). Owing to his efforts in 1968 the *Wolfram von Eschenbach-Bund* was transformed into the *Wolfram von Eschenbach-Gesellschaft*, which soon became the most distinguished scholarly society for students of medieval German literature. He edited the first ten volumes of the society's periodical, the *Wolfram-Studien* (1970-1988). Together with his Oxford colleague Peter Ganz (1920-2006), the leading figure in the university world of German studies in England for nearly half a century, Werner Schröder masterminded the founding of the prestigious Anglo-German colloquia; the first one was held in Oxford in 1966. These colloquia led to an intensive exchange of ideas, particularly between young German and English scholars, out of which grew lifelong friendships and collaborations.

The last years of his academic teaching were overshadowed by the effects of the German student movement of 1968. The Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mayence, of which he had been a member since 1975, then became a most welcome place of refuge. In the Academy's *Abhandlungen* he published a considerable number of profound studies, many of them devoted to problems of the transmission and edition of medieval German texts (cf. *BBSIA* LII, 2000, 109). Among his works devoted to Arthurian subjects are detailed studies and editions, concerning, for example, the *Crône* of Heinrich von dem Türlin (cf. *BBSIA* XLIX, 1997, 59 and 60), the *Mantel*-Fragment (cf. *BBSIA* L, 1998, 56) and the *Jüngere Titirel* (cf. *BBSIA* L, 1998, 58). His edition of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm* (1978) was accompanied by an exemplary index of proper names; an excellent index to the proper names in *Parzival* and *Titirel* was to follow in 1982 (cf. *BBSIA* XXXIV, 1982, 47).

Werner Schröder's commitment to furthering medieval German studies is particularly obvious in the planning, preparation and co-editing of the second edition of one of the most important basic research tools for medieval literature in Germany: *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, the first volume of which was published in 1978, the 14th and last one in 2008.

All his life Werner Schröder was a committed reviewer and critic of developments in medieval German studies. His judgements and opinions were not always to everybody's taste. However, he will always be remembered as a scholar who was dedicated to philology in its truest sense.

Kurt Gärtner, Trier/Marburg