TRANSFIGURING SOCIAL NATURE:
ENVIRONMENTAL AND AESTHETIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN GERMAN REALISM

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This dissertation investigates the relation between post-1848 German realist aesthetics and the representation of nature as physically reconstituted by the human labor process. Environmental transformation in the form of cultivation, pollution, and sprawl would appear to pose a challenge to a realist poetics invested in achieving artistic status through "transfiguration" (*Verklärung*), or the synthesis between material reality and poesy, inasmuch as the mimetic representation of ecological depredation carries with it a reassertion of both prosaic capitalist relations and the base material reality capitalism produces. This study asks how Adalbert Stifter, Wilhelm Raabe, and Theodor Fontane negotiate the mimetic and poetic imperatives of realism where their texts encounter environmental depredation. I argue that the environment's increasingly social character feeds into each author's poetic project, such that environmental transformation grounds a dynamic realism that binds political critique with a broader theoretical reflection on the conditions of possibility for poesy in modernity. The encounter between the social production of nature and poetic realism is crucial for Stifter, for whom the cultivation of the environment mirrors the task he assigns to realist narrative of making perceptible the general moral order that sustains the universe. These cultivated utopias are impossible for Wilhelm Raabe, for whom environmental depredation becomes an agent of generative destabilization that stymies the transfiguration gesture and catalyzes a critical reevaluation of the status of art in a degraded world. Finally I turn to Fontane's *Stechlin* to consider how the poetic character of Brandenburg is determined by an emerging Anthropocene reality. By looking at the relation

between environmental depredation and art, “Transfiguring Social Nature” develops a line of ecocritical inquiry that moves beyond the focus of much earlier ecocritical scholarship on nature and place to account for the poetically constitutive aspects of environmental transformation while also considering its deleterious effects. At the same time considering environmental issues as integral to the texts' otherwise social framework allows us to see realism both as a dynamic literary and theoretical discourse that also figures within the genealogy of contemporary environmentalism.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alexander Phillips received his B.A. in German Studies and Comparative Literature from the University of California, Irvine in 2007, having also studied at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. From 2007-2008 he studied again at the Humboldt Universität with a DAAD Fellowship. He began studying German literature at Cornell University in 2008, receiving his MA in 2012 and his PhD in 2015. In January 2015 he began working as a Collegiate Assistant Professor with University of Maryland University College Europe.

For Amy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA: Wilhelm Raabe *Sämtliche Werke* (Braunschweiger Ausgabe)

GBA: Theodor Fontane *Große Brandenburger Ausgabe*

HFA: Theodor Fontane *Werke, Schriften und Briefe* (Hanser Fontane Ausgabe)

HKG: Adalbert Stifter *Werke und Briefe: Historsich-kritische Gesamtausgabe*

ISLE: *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*

VASILO: *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich*

INTRODUCTION
Realism and the Social Character of Nature

In May 2000 atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen and biological scientist Eugene Stoermer argued that the scale of the human impact on the earth's systems meant that the planet had entered a new geological epoch, the "anthropocene."[1] "Holocene," the officially recognized term for the current interglacial period, does not adequately account for the global scale of anthropogenic changes to the environment nor their duration, which may continue for the next 50,000 years.[2] "Anthropocene" has yet to officially replace "Holocene" as the name for our current moment in geological history, and the term is not uncontested. But our acceptance of the term as nomenclature is less important for the purposes of this dissertation than the circumstances that the term describes: that the atmosphere and lithosphere, as well as the biosphere, are in significant measure an artifact of the activity of a single species.[3] The reality of global warming makes the planetary scale of human economic activity visible: the release of heat-trapping greenhouse gases through the consumption of hydrocarbons in one region contributes to the thawing of ice at the poles, which contributes to extreme weather in yet another part of the planet. The Anthropocene thus describes the reality of the social production of nature on a planetary scale, bringing into sharp contrast that what we call "nature" has a largely social character, that is, that it has been "defined, delimited, and even physically reconstituted by different societies, often in order to serve specific, and usually dominant social interests."[4] This

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1 Paul J. Crutzen and Stoermer, Eugene F., "The 'Anthropocene,'" *IGBP Newsletter* 41 (May 2000): 17–18.

2 Ibid., 17.

3 For a consideration of the term from a geological standpoint, including on issues of formalization, see Jan Zalasiewicz et al., "Introduction – The Anthropocene: A New Epoch of Geological Time?," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* 369, no. 1938 (2011): 835–841.

4 Noel Castree, "Socializing Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics," in *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*, ed. Noel Castree and Bruce Braun (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 3.

dissertation looks to German realism for a historical image of the social character of nature, and to consider the stakes of an Anthropocene reality for a mode of art invested in the poetic representation of that reality.

The question that animates this project is, how does realism poetically represent a world marked by industrial pollution, urban sprawl, and topographies transformed in the interest of political-economic hierarchies? The problem is not that we are confronted with an aesthetics of the ugly when smog or an industrial cesspool enter the realist text, at least not primarily. Instead social nature marks the persistence of the prosaic in literary works that reflect upon the conditions of possibility for poesy in modernity. The persistence of social nature, I will show, runs against the grain of each author's own realism, as well as against that of the mid-nineteenth century claim from programmatic realist theory that poesy arises through a process of "transfiguration" (*Verklärung*). Broadly speaking, transfiguration designates a process of artistic formation, the moment when the work of art transcends the world it mimetically represents and achieves artistic autonomy over and against the material, including in the case of the works I examine the ecosocial condition of the the worlds the texts imagine. Social nature becomes a problem for realist aesthetics because in the nineteenth century it is a material product of social relations that since Hegel have challenged the status of poesy.

To illustrate how the condition of the material world becomes a problem for art and artistic production, we might consider the following passage from Theodor Fontane's 1872 essay on historical novelist Willibald Alexis. Here Fontane is concerned specifically with the artistic status of landscape representation, but the fact that landscape is one way of representing nature is only part of what makes this passage relevant. Fontane's reflections instead illustrate the relation

between environmental transformation and realist aesthetics as an instance where a confluence of aesthetic, social, and ecological conditions has discredited landscape description's claim to the poetic side of poetic realism. Fontane remarks:

> Eine Sonne auf- oder untergehen, ein Mühlwasser über das Wehr fallen, einen Baum rauschen zu lassen, ist die billigste literarische Beschäftigung, die gedacht werden kann. In jedes kleinen Mädchens Schulaufsatz kann man dergleichen finden; es gehört zu den Künsten, die jeder übt und die deshalb längst aufgehört haben als Kunst zu gelten; es wird bei der Lektüre von jeder regelrechten Leserin einfach überschlagen und in neunundneunzig Fällen von hundert mit völligem Recht, denn es hält den Gang der Erzählung nur auf. Es ist noch langweiliger wie eine Zimmerbeschreibung, bei der man sich wenigstens wünschen kann, das Porträt des Prinzen Heinrich oder die Kuckucksuhr zu besitzen. Die Landschaftsschilderung hat nur noch Wert, wenn sie als künstlerische Folie für einen Stein auftritt, der dadurch doppelt leuchtend wird, wenn sie den Zweck verfolgt, Stimmungen vorzubereiten oder zu steigern.
>
> Having a sun go up or down, mill water fall over a weir, or a tree rustle is the cheapest literary occupation imaginable. One can find the same thing in any little girl's school essay, it's one of those arts that everyone practices and that therefore has long since ceased to count as art; every proper reader simply skips over it in the course of her reading, and justifiably so in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, because it only holds up the course of the narrative. It's more boring than a description of a room, where one can at least wish to own the portrait of Prince Heinrich or the cuckoo clock. Landscape description only has value when it is used as an artistic overlay for a jewel that becomes twice as luminescent when it aims to establish or to enhance the mood.[5]

Fontane sides in this passage with other critics of descriptive writing, such as Friedrich Hebbel in the nineteenth century and Georg Lukács in the twentieth, but he accords landscape description a particularly low status amongst other kinds of description.[6] Landscape description is a kind of

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[5] Theodor Fontane, *Werke, Schriften und Briefe* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1975), III–1 : 456. All translations of German texts are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

[6] For Hebbel the focus on description reverses the necessary relation between great and small to the extent that the larger reality that the work seeks to represent vanishes under the detail. See for instance Hebbel's polemic against Adalbert Stifter in "Das Komma im Frack" in *Werke* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1965), 685–687. Georg Lukács argues that texts in which description is the decisive principle mask the broader reality of social relations, whereas narrative makes those relations visible. "Das Erzählen gliedert, die Beschreibung nivelliert." See Georg Lukács, "Erzählen oder Beschreiben?: Zur Diskussion über Naturalismus und Formalismus," in *Kunst und Objektive Wahrheit: Essays zur Literaturtheorie und -geschichte* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1977), 132.

realist representation that is not intrinsically banal, but rather its banality is historical, it has "long since ceased to count as art." It is an instance of Friedrich Theodor Vischer's general diagnosis of nineteenth century art: "was noch von schönen Formen besteht, das sind Formen eines überlebten Gehalts. Also: die schönen Formen sind nicht zeitgemäß, und die zeitgemäßen sind nicht schön" ("what remains of beautiful forms are the forms of a content they have outlived. That is to say that the beautiful forms are not timely, and the timely ones are not beautiful."[7]

The question, then, is not just why such representation is banal, but why now? The answer Fontane supplies is that too many dilettantish writers wishing to effect the beautiful have rendered it an especially artless literary move. A sign of its reduced status, perhaps, is its ascription to a community of female writers and readers – the little girls who produce such descriptions and the female readers (Fontane specifies Leser*in*) who skip over such passages. But that raises the question of why landscape description is discredited. I read dilettantism in Fontane's essay as a symptom, not a cause. What makes landscape description one of the "untimely" forms, to borrow Vischer's language, is that it is a literary manifestation of a "back to nature" impulse that is contingent upon industrial capital's rapacious treatment of the external world. Gernot Böhme observes that industrial society creates the need for nature as the other, a societal need that is satisfied not just in nature tourism, but in objects ranging from the decoration on a piece of porcelain to fake flowers, things that are mass produced in order to satisfy needs that industrial society produces.[8] Landscape description as Fontane understands it belongs on this list of substitutes for nature, particularly pre-industrial nature. Significantly, the

[7] Friedrich Theodor Vischer, *Aesthetik, oder Wissenschaft des Schönen* (Stuttgart: Carl Mäckes Verlag, 1846-1857), 2,1 : 296.

[8] Gernot Böhme, *Natürlich Natur: Über Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), 21.

example Fontane mocks is a landscape with a mill and a stream, an instance of a kind of *Mühlenromantik.* The clichéd nature of the mill as a literary topos will figure in one of the novels included in this study, Wilhelm Raabe's *Pfisters Mühle*, where the mills' romantic aura is unstable because it is anachronistic in the face of modern industry.[9]

Landscape description is aesthetically hollow because it is the mode of choice for dilettantes, and it is the mode of choice for dilettantes because they create out of a common sense of need for nature that historical ecosocial reality produces. The dilettante attempts to meet this need by creating the illusion of nature with a panoramic description of a landscape. The panorama is important here, in Fontane's example the literary panorama is complete with the illusion of life and movement with the moving sun and falling water, so that landscape description is an unfortunate cross-fertilization of written and visual media. Such description then is poetically compromised in a double sense: first that it mimics a technical visual medium, and second that in mimicking that medium, it strives to construct a recognizable reality without regard to any sort of artistic status. As a literary equivalent to the panorama landscape deiscription's aesthetic function is limited to the spectacle of technical illusion, and so its realism collapses entirely into mimesis. Hence what Vischer would view as a content that has outlived its poetic potential.

This dissertation investigates the relation between the social production of the environment and German realist poetics in select works by Adalbert Stifter, Wilhelm Raabe, and Theodor Fontane. I have included these authors because of the high stakes of environmental transformations for the poetological reflections they develop. To what extent any text included in

[9] For an overview of the history of the mill topos and its artistic status into the nineteenth century, see Günter Bayerl, "Herrn Pfisters und anderer Leute Mühlen: Das Verhältnis von Mensch, Technik und Umwelt im Spiegel eines literarischen Topos," in *Technik in der Literatur: Ein Forschungsüberblick in zwölf Aufsätzen*, ed. Harro Segeberg (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987), 51–101.

this study is an "environmental text" is not a question that I will seek to answer, except to demonstrate that there is a real and relevant environmental thematic at work.[10] This environmental thematic is largely focused on images of cultivation, urban and industrial sprawl, and air and water pollution, among other issues that today are often the focus of environmental politics. While it is central to the political content of the works I examine, tracing its contours is not my primary objective. Instead my thesis is that environmental transformation through the human labor process is an agent of generative destabilization for the realist projects of Adalbert Stifter, Wilhelm Raabe, and Theodor Fontane. The social production of nature, whether the texts figure it as benign improvement or ecological calamity, is also a material reassertion of the prosaic social relations – the everyday conditions of industrial capital – that their realisms aim to transfigure and thereby transcend. Environmental transformation therefore forbids any binding solution to the question of the conditions of possibility for poesy in a prosaic world order. But it is precisely in forbidding a binding answer to the question that the texts' environmental thematic becomes generative: in unsettling the claims and strategies of German realist theory, the social character of nature becomes a driver of the texts' aesthetic reflections, and the environment emerges as a crucial site for thinking through the problems and possibilities of poetic realism. Because the material world is an *agent* of generative destabilization, it is also more than a mere epiphenomenon, as it would be if it were *only* a product of abstract human relations: interesting,

[10] On what an "environmental text" might look like, I defer to the criteria offered by Lawrence Buell: "The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history," "the human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest," "human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation," and "some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text." Buell notes that "by these criteria, few works fail to qualify at least marginally, but few qualify unequivocally and consistently." Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 7–8. Robert Kern points out a crucial distinction in considering a text's orientation towards the environment, that "texts . . . are environmental but not necessarily environmental*ist*." See Robert Kern, "Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For?," *ISLE* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 11.

but ultimately of relative importance.

This argument makes a double intervention, one on the side of realism and the other on the side of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism – a term that designates a variety of critical approaches that emerge under late twentieth century environmental crises – makes its first intervention as a critical discourse by making material nature and nature representation an object of literary study, thereby setting itself against a contemporary literary theory that has allegedly overdetermined the extent to which reality is constructed through language and human perception. In its "first wave"[11] especially it insists that nature in texts refers to a material reality, and thus is irreducible to textuality.[12] Especially in its formative moments ecocriticism starts with a kind of realist insistence on the material, and even as ecocritical scholarship has since sought ways of expanding its own boundaries beyond ecomimesis, the disjunction between rhetoric and literal truth persists as a theoretical issue when one asks about literature and environment.[13] This dissertation draws on earlier ecocriticism to the extent that it takes seriously the fictional text's presentation of the material environment as real. Framing the texts around the environment will

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[11] The term "first wave" ecocriticism is from Lawrence Buell's *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. "First wave" ecocriticism for Buell is characterized largely by a push for closer alliance between literary criticism and the natural sciences. See Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 17–28.

[12] We might consider, for instance, the stakes of Jonathan Bate's book *Romantic Ecology.* Bate argues that while Wordsworth is popularly received as a "nature poet" for his interest in daffodils and England's Lake District, contemporary criticism has come to deny the material reality of nature for him. "But some of the most eminent literary critics of our time have believed that Wordsworth was *not* a nature poet, or that there is no such thing as nature, or that if there is such a thing and Wordsworth was interested in it then that interest was very suspect on political grounds." Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991), 4. For Lawrence Buell this circumstance is a result of the imperatives of literary criticism as a discipline: "For instance, to posit a disjunction between text and world is both an indispensable starting point for mature literary understanding and a move that tends to efface the world. . . . The problems are aggravated by the cloistral, urbanized quality of the environment in which this criticism tends to be practiced. When an author undertakes to imagine someone else's imagination of a tree while sitting, Bartleby-like, in a cubicle with no view, small wonder if the tree seems to be nothing more than a textual function and one comes to doubt that the author could have fancied otherwise." Buell *The Environmental Imagination*, 5.

[13] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 2nd ed, The New Critical Idiom (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 5–11.

illustrate that the artistic reflections and innovations of Stifter, Raabe, and Fontane are unthinkable without the other side of their realisms, the interest or even inclination towards the more normative realisms of nineteenth century programmatic theory. In considering realism as a historical discourse on the conditions of possibility for poesy, this dissertation will, second, show that their environmental representation moves in two directions: the text moves towards the material environment as an object for poetic representation, but in so doing the environment feeds back into the texts' strategies for constituting a poetic reality. This is especially so where the texts encounter the consequences of ecological transformation.

To illustrate how social nature and realism as a concern in the history of German letters fit together, I will sketch out the problems in more detail, looking first at the production of the natural environment, then at realism itself, with a consideration of contemporary ecocritical perspectives throughout.

Nature and Environment

Ecocriticism, particularly in its so-called "first wave" in the 1990s, is largely about developing a criticism that gets to the material reality of the object-world, that is, building an ecological criticism that values nature in literature as something more than sheer textuality. It is why "nature writing" and non-fictive genres receive particular focus and are supposed to have heightened political stakes.[14] One need not look too far in the works of Adalbert Stifter, Wilhelm Raabe, and Theodor Fontane to find ecological problems variously thematized. Attentiveness to

[14] See, for instance, Cheryll Glotfelty's comment that "in an increasingly urban society, nature writing plays a vital role in teaching us to value the natural world." Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xxiii. See also Buell's discussion of "Nonfictional Aesthetics: Dual Accountability" in *The Environmental Imagination,* 91–103.

the human as well as the more than human object-world is a hallmark of Stifter's descriptive narratives, and the proper treatment of nature is central to the moral ethical vision at the core of his realism. The catastrophic results of urban and industrial sprawl appear throughout Raabe's oeuvre, from his debut novel *Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse* (*Chronicle of Sparrow Alley*, 1856) to his final fragmentary novel *Altershausen* (posthumously published in 1911) and are of particular narrative importance to the novels I will be considering in chapter two, *Pfisters Mühle* (*Pfister's Mill*, 1884) and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* (*The Birdsong Papers*, 1896). And as much as Fontane's *Der Stechlin* (1898) is about the political and social constellations of Wilhelmine Germany, the novel's vision of the era is organized around a feature of the topography, the novel's eponymous lake, Lake Stechlin. Each text is, to some extent, concerned with the material world in a way that does not move entirely into abstraction away from the environment. Nor do these features of the texts fall under a "nature in literature" rubric; I speak instead of environment because nature here is not a static "thing," but is instead dynamic and historical. For each there is "some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given [that] is at least implicit in the text."[15] If we understand ecocriticism as "judg[ing] the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action," as William Howarth suggests,[16] then it would be just as easy to find these authors wanting: Fontane seems unperturbed by the environmental degradation he represents, Raabe appears to be less concerned with the condition of the environment for its own sake and more with what it means for humans, and Stifter sees the project of socializing nature as a good thing if it fits into the moral-ethical

[15] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 8.
[16] William Howarth, "Some Principles of Ecocriticism," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 69.

paradigm that informs his realism.

If we consider both the environmental thematic together with the seeming anthropocentrism of each author, then we encounter two conceptual issues that are important for my consideration of ecology and realist aesthetics. One issue would be that of representation, what it means to say that nature is "in" a text, particularly a realist text. This will be a topic for my discussion of realism. The second issue concerns nature itself as a concept for ecocriticism generally. The artificiality of a neat distinction between nature and culture is something that can easily be lost if ecocriticism is understood in terms of the definition that Howarth suggests: we have a nature to be celebrated on the one hand, and a despoilation to be called out and decried on the other. The perception that first wave ecocriticism focuses too narrowly on "pure" nature has been a point for subsequent revisionist critique. From an ecojustice perspective, the insistence in ecocriticism on "nature" as something autonomous from "culture" carries with it the danger of isolating environmental issues from human power networks.[17] Ecocritical insistence nature for its own sake, that is, real existing nature in the text was assailed from a literary theoretical

[17] See for instance the texts collected in the 2002 volume *The Ecojustice Reader*, especially T.V. Reed's essay "Towards an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism." Reed argues that in ecocriticism "the center of concern needs to shift significantly for ecocriticism to truly represent the range of connections among culture, criticism, and the environment. Where a certain type of ecocritic worries about 'social issues' watering down ecological critique, mounting evidence makes clear that the opposite has been the case, that pretending to isolate the environment from its necessary interrelation with society and culture has severely limited the appeal of environmental thought, to the detriment of both the natural and social worlds." T.V. Reed, "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism," in *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy*, ed. Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), 146. David Harvey, likewise, argues, "The danger here is of accepting, often without knowing it, concepts that preclude radical critique. One of the most pervasive and difficult to surmount barriers . . . is that which insists on separating out "nature" and "society" as coherent entities. What is surprising here, is that even the deepest and the most biocentric of ecologists at some level accepts this distinction (or worse still directly appeals to it by depicting society, for example, as a "cancer" let loose upon the planet)." David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 140. Cheryll Glotfelty's introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader* invites such a critique when she writes that "if your knowledge of the outside world were limited to what you cold infer from the major publications of the literary profession, you would quickly discern that race, class, and gender were the hot topics of the late twentieth century, but you would never suspect that the earth's life support systems were under stress. Indeed, you might never know that there was an earth at all." Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," xvi.

perspective among others by Dana Phillips, who in his book *The Truth of Ecology* is interested in overcoming ecocriticism's alleged fixation on literal representation.[18] And in his programatically titled *Ecology without Nature* Timothy Morton argues that "the very idea of 'nature' which so many hold dear will have to wither away in an 'ecological' state of human society. Strange as it may sound, the idea of nature is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art."[19] The reason is that "nature . . . stands at the end of a potentially infinite series of other terms that collapse into it," turning it into a slippery, ideologically useful metaphor.[20]

The conceptual problems that nature poses become particularly pointed in the concept of wilderness. Viewed as the polar opposite of civilization, wilderness seems indispensable to a large swath of environmental politics, from conservationism to deep ecology. Because wilderness is figured as nature at its "purist," we can see the recent critiques of the specific concept of wilderness as a particularly high stakes instance within the broader debates over nature. William Cronon's essay "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" is one of the more forceful and more influential critiques of the wilderness concept (and by extension normative notions of "pure" nature). Cronon's thesis:

> Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, [wilderness] is quite profoundly a human creation – indeed, the creation of very

[18] Phillips positions himself against what he sees as ecocriticism's "fundamentalist fixation on literal representation." He writes: "To insist that trees must be present *in literature*, just because they happen to be mentioned and described or even celebrated there, seems hostile to the very possibility of imagination, which pays its dividends in the coin of figuration, not representation. And to persist in thinking that trees might somehow be present in literature after all, despite the strictures of recent literary theory (and at least two thousand years of philosophy), is uncritical and, worse, hostile to criticism." Dana Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7, 9.

[19] Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[20] Ibid., 14. The problem with the idea of nature for Morton is threefold: "First, it is a mere empty placeholder for a host of other concepts. Second, it has the force of law, a norm against which deviation is measured. Third, 'nature' is a Pandora's box, a word that encapsulates a potentially infinite series of disparate fantasy objects" Ibid.

> particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history. It is not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization. Instead, it is a product of that civilization and could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff of which it is made. Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural. As we gaze into the mirror it holds up for us, we too easily imagine that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires. For this reason we mistake ourselves when we suppose that wilderness can be the solution to our culture's problematic relation with the nonhuman world, for wilderness is itself no small part of the problem. [21]

Cronon's essay examines how the sublime and, in the American context, the myth of the frontier caused a shift in the notion of wilderness from "wasteland" (a meaning that we see in Stifter) to a site of transcendence. The problem is the challenge that wilderness poses in deciphering its social function. While many environmental movements draw their moral authority from nature and wilderness specifically as sites that are closer to the divine, Cronon points out the manifold ways in which the concept has been a party to histories of race and class based injustice. Cronon's analysis of wilderness demonstrates the shakiness of normative nature as a grounds for environmental politics and, as we shall see in the texts, environmental poetics: what we assume to be normative nature turns out to be the product of the socio-historical processes that appear as the villain in many environmentalist camps.

Uncommon Ground, the volume in which Cronon's essay appears, first appeared in 1995, and it prompted criticism from environmentally concerned academic and activist communities who allege that it represents, in Glen Love's terms, a "cultural-constructionist position that – in addition to ignoring biology – plays into the hands of the destroyers."[22] The division between

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[21] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1996), 69–70.

[22] Glen Love, *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 21.

Cronon and Love appears to break down along “nature-sceptical” versus “nature-endorsing” lines, with Love identifying himself explicitly with the former.[23] While he is only one of many detractors of the nature and wilderness as construct thesis, his argument is emblematic of the suspicion of the critique of nature coming from many “nature-endorsers,”[24] but his book is emblematic of a first wave ecocritical objection to the views of nature that the volume puts forward. In his 2003 book *Practical Ecocriticism*, Love's concern is that the nature critique removes the epistemic grounds for an effective ecological politics.[25] If we accept this concern, then from an ecocritical perspective it has a hermeneutic corollary. In this light the epistemic problem not only is a roadblock for political action, but also for an ecocritical reading of literary texts: just as the critique of nature allegedly blunts the possibility for political action, it likewise allegedly blunts the critical edge of literature that addresses modernity's rapacious impact on the environment by leaving us with little more than a representation with no real referent. And if literature is supposed to direct the reader to the outside world, the the critique of nature only stymies a proper appreciation of the work.

The problem with Love's use of Soper's “nature-endorsing” versus “nature-sceptical” dichotomy, and with his argument generally, in my view, is that it tends to collapse crucial

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[23] Ibid., 7. The terms “nature-endorsing” and “nature-sceptical” are Kate Soper's, although she hastens to point out the crudeness of such a division. See Kate Soper, *What Is Nature?: Culture, Politics and the Non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 3–5.

[24] J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson have documented recent debates over wilderness by collecting statements from scholars and political activists. See J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998). and *The Wilderness Debate Rages on: Continuing the Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

[25] See also Kate Soper, who, in arguing for a reconciliation between “construction” and “realism,” falls on the side of realism when it comes to political action. “But I defend a realist position as offering the only responsible basis from which to argue for any kind of political change whether in our dealings with nature or anything else. I recognize, that is, that there is no reference to that which is independent of discourse except in discourse, but dissent from any position which appeals to this truth as a basis for denying the extra-discursive reality of nature.” See Soper, *What Is Nature?*, 8.

differences between several lines of critique under the broad label of "constructionism."[26] In my view, Love overstates the negative stakes of so-called constructionism.[27] If environmental depredation is a feature of industrial capitalism, then the "destroyers" do not need an argument such as Cronon's to go on destroying, because the capitalist accumulation imperative is license enough. And not all arguments that might be labeled "constructionist" "exclude nature except for its cultural determination or linguistic construction" or "seek to distance environmental destruction from reality," as Love charges.[28] The problems that wilderness is implicated in, for instance, such as the displacement of Native American populations to create nature reserves, are very real.[29] To return to Cronon's essay, he does not deny the reality of the sensible world, and his essay concludes by advocating for the replacement of a reductive concept of "wilderness" with a more inclusive concept of "wildness" (a term borrowed from Thoreau) that recognizes the "naturalness" of environments of differing social characters.[30] If anything, this is a constructionist position that is also "nature endorsing."

But Love's argument is an important reminder that in our criticism of nature we should not inadvertently lapse into an uncritical anthropocentric politics. Since "the idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history," as Raymond Williams famously observed,[31] and since this reality figures into Stifter, Raabe, and Fontane's narrative universes, asking about the social constructedness of nature is the first step towards

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[26] Nor is he alone in doing so. For some of the crucial distinctions within what is commonly called "constructionism" see David Demeritt, "Being Constructive About Nature," in *Social Nature: Theory, Practice, and Politics*, ed. Noel Castree and Bruce Braun (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 22–40.

[27] David Demeritt observes, "Demystifying scientific knowledge and demonstrating the social relations its construction involves does not imply disbelief in that knowledge or in the phenomena it represents" Ibid., 35.

[28] Love, *Practical Ecocriticism*, 8.

[29] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 79–81.

[30] Ibid., 89.

[31] Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature," in *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980), 67.

critically understanding the representation of the environment in their texts. They represent the transformation of nature through the human labor process, a transformation that happens on top of the insight that the earth's systems were historical prior to *homo sapiens*.[32] Their texts capture a historicity of nature that Karl Marx discusses in his critique of Ludwig Feuerbach in *The German Ideology.* For Marx, writing at the same time that Stifter was revising the stories that would become the book version of the *Studien*, the question of man's relation to nature dissolves in the simple fact "that the celebrated 'unity of man with nature' has always existed in industry and has existed in varying forms in every epoch according to the lesser or greater development of industry."[33] Feuerbach, according to Marx, misses the dialectical relation between the historical means of production and distribution on the one side and the constitution of the physical world on the other so that in Manchester he sees only factories where there had been spinning wheels, or in the case of the Campagna die Roma he sees only sheep and swamps where the Roman elite once maintained villas and vineyards.[34] Marx is thus skeptical of the possibilities of speaking of an autonomous nature as Feuerbach understands it. He writes, "For that matter, nature, the nature that preceded human history, is not by any means the nature in which Feuerbach lives, it is nature which today no longer exists anywhere (except perhaps on a few Australian coral-islands of

[32] Ibid, 73. Darwin's *Origin of Species* upends a Linnaean understanding of nature as something that can be understood spatially, but which has no temporal depth. Darwin addresses nature's historicity, for instance, when considering Linnaen taxonomy: "The ingenuity and utility of this system [of taxonomy] are indisputable. But many naturalists think that something more is meant by the Natural System; they believe that it reveals the plan of the Creator; but unless it be specified whether order in time or space, or what else is meant by the plan of the Creator, it seems to me that nothing is thus added to our knowledge. Such expressions as that famous one of Linnaeus, and which we often meet with in a more or less concealed form, that the characters do not make the genus, but that the genus gives the characters, seem to imply that something more is included in our classification, than mere resemblance. I believe that something more is included; and that propinquity of descent, the only known cause of the similarity of organic beings, is the bond, hidden as it is by various degrees of modification, which is partially revealed to us by our classifications." Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 363.

[33] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 63.

[34] Ibid.

recent origin) and which, therefore does not exist for Feuerbach."[35] Given that the acidification of the world's oceans from greenhouse gas emissions are causing coral reefs to die, even Marx's one exception does not hold, now or when he wrote it. But the point is that acknowledging the historicity of what we take as nature is not denying the reality of nature, but rather the possibility of assuming a singular nature as separate and apart from human history.[36] Indeed, admitting to the social character of nature is a crucial starting point for thinking through the nature/culture dualism under capitalism. Neil Smith argues that without acknowledging how exchange-value enters into our understanding of "first" and "second" natures we will be perpetually stuck with received understanding of nature.

> It would be difficult to move beyond the limited, ambiguous, and potentially ideological claim that on the one hand nature is social while on the other society is natural. Equally limited and problematic is the claim that they are "interrelated" and "interact" with each other, for interaction is no substitute for the dialectic, the key to which is in the production process. Elements of the first nature, previously unaltered by human activity, are subjected to the labor process and re-emerge to be social matter of the second nature. There, though their form has been altered by human activity, they do not cease to be natural in the sense that they are somehow

[35] Ibid.

[36] The relation between Marxism and ecology is a fraught one, especially so in the wake of the poor environmental record of twentieth century communist states. Anna Bramwell, for instance, argues against a green image of Marx in her study *Ecology in the Twentieth Century* when she writes, "it is clear that Marx does not *like* nature. He agrees with today's ecologist that the countryside falls victim to the town, that capitalism destroys rural life, that capitalist agriculture destroys the peasant. But there is an undoubted note of pleasure in this prophecy. It is not made in any serious value-free spirit."She adds that "Marx's argument against nature on the grounds of the necessity of historical development is, indeed, overwhelmingly subsumed in his resentment of unaltered nature." Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 33–34. Kate Soper has pointed out that there are many Marxes, and while Marx and Marxism are open to green critique, the techno-determinist image that Bramwell deploys demands reappraisal. The alienation concept is the key moment of congruence in Soper's view. See Kate Soper, "Greening Prometheus: Marxism and Ecology," in *The Greening of Marxism*, ed. Ted Benton (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), 83–86. James O'Connor finds Bramwell's criticism half true, "Marx *did* have a vision of society in which humankind ceases to be alienated from nature, one in which the appropriation of nature is not based on the logic of capitalist accumulation but rather on direct individual social need, on the one hand, and what we would today call "ecologically rational" production on the other. This vision, however, did *not* include an ecological society in which nature is not merely a productive force but also is valued as an end in itself." James O'Connor *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998), 2. Lance Newman argues for an ecocriticism that is cognizant of the materiality of the social order and that draws on historical materialism in order to better account for how certain ideas regarding the environment gain prominence within the social order. See Lance Newman, "Marxism and Ecocriticism," *ISLE* 9, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 1–25.

> now immune from non-human forces and processes – gravity, physical pressure, chemical transformation, biological interaction. But they also become subject to a new set of forces and processes that are social in origin. Thus the relation with nature develops along with the development of the social relations, and insofar as the latter are contradictory, so too is the relation with nature.[37]

Asking about the social character of nature is a means of critically viewing a received topos without assuming a totalizing image of nature.[38] Speaking of social nature as nature that has a social character is different from making the claim that Smith rejects, that nature is social and society is natural. It admits of the reality of the history of human transformation of nature, without positing either a normative nature nor naturalizing the social relations that produced the character of nature at a given period in history.

Asking about how nature has been produced through human labor does not by itself discredit nature as a concept. Paradoxically, it is through working in and on nature that nature persists. "Nature has to be thought of, that is to say, as separate from man, before any question of intervention or command, and the method and ethics of either, can arise," as Raymond Williams points out.[39] But it is in working on nature that nature stops being something "over there." This is Marx's point when he argues that the unity of man and nature exists in industry, understood broadly. The paradox is that we have to accept a logic that reifies nature as outside and beyond the human realm, something from which we are already alienated and separated, before we can argue that we really are part of nature after all. This happens because the character of nature after humans have mixed in their labor effects a change in the very concept of nature, according to Gernot Böhme.[40] For Böhme the human ability to overcome nature's limits and reproduce its

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[37] Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, 3rd ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 68.
[38] See Gernot Böhme *Natürlich Natur*, 65.
[39] Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature," 75.
[40] Böhme, *Natürlich Natur*, 115.

workings through technology does to nature what Walter Benjamin argues technological reproducibility does to art: it robs nature of its aura and thereby forces a shift in the way nature is conceived of.

> Die Möglichkeit der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit von Natur bedeutet das Ende einer Vorstellung von Natur, die ihre Prägnanz gerade aus der Entgegensetzung zum Bereich menschlichen Herstellens erhielt. Die gegenwärtige Anrufung von Natur als Wert erweist sich insofern als ideologisch, als sie sich auf die Naturvorstellung als etwas Festes gerade in dem Moment beruft, in dem sie – wohl historisch irreversibel – zerfällt.
>
> The possibility of the technical reproducibility of nature means the end of a concept of nature that gains its potency out of its opposition to the sphere of human production. The current invocation of nature as a value proves itself to be ideological insofar as it calls upon a concept of nature as something fixed at the very moment in which such a notion falls apart, a collapse that is probably historically irreversible.[41]

Implicit in this argument is also the reason why asking about the social character of nature is not the same as positing a simplistic cultural constructionism. What is discredited in the social production and reproduction of nature is not the existence of nature as more-than-human material, forces, etc., but rather the aura of nature as something pure and (as yet) unviolated, a notion epitomized in the wilderness concept. The challenge, then, both for this project and for ecocriticism generally "is to keep one eye on the way in which 'nature' is always in some ways culturally constructed, and the other on the fact that nature really exists, both the object and, albeit distantly, the origin of our discourse."[42]

What, then, is the state of the environment in the texts themselves? How is nature conceptualized there? To say that nature has a social character is to say that it carries the traces of human economic activity, traces that determine the aesthetic experience of the place and from

[41] Ibid.
[42] Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 10.

there the possibilities for its poeticization. The production of nature is a corollary to the production of space,[43] and what we see is domination of the social character over what might otherwise be taken as "natural."[44] It is really only with Adalbert Stifter in *Brigitta* and *Abdias* that we glimpse parts of the earth not (yet) shaped by human productive forces, and these spaces appear as counter to his vision of humans within an ethical order of the universe. For Stifter the production of nature is a matter of ordering to make visible the larger world preserving. Raabe in *Pfisters Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* imagines the transformation of the environment within the context of a bourgeois transformation of reality, so that nature is reduced and reified to serve the logic of industrial capitalism. At the end of the nineteenth century in his novel *Der Stechlin*, Theodor Fontane scales up environmental transformation as a phenomenon not limited to the local, with the consequence that the separation between human and natural history collapses. What we see crystallizing in this last case, I will argue, is an emerging vision of an Anthropocene reality that feeds back into the novel's poetological reflections. In each instance the pervasiveness of the material world is crucial for the texts' realism.

I began by pointing out that ecocriticism, especially in its first wave in the 1990s, is highly concerned with recovering the material reality of the world as an object for criticism. Its insistence on concrete reality runs counter to what critics such as Jonathan Bate and Glen Love perceive to be a post-modern theoretical paradigm that reduces the material to abstraction. In this sense, ecocriticism is a kind of realist project in its own right, and as such it has a surprising affinity with nineteenth century German poetic realism. The crucial difference is that

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[43] Smith, *Uneven Development*, 92.

[44] The observation that "social space is a social product" is developed most forcefully by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 1–67, here 26. Lefebvre observes that when it comes to nature, even as the social character becomes visible "this typical quality of visibility does not, however, imply decipherability of the inherent social relations. On the contrary, the analysis of these relations has become harder and more paradoxical." Ibid., 83.

ecocriticism moves in the opposite direction of German poetic realism: where the former moves towards the material, the latter seeks poetic transcendence within and then away from the material.[45] But it is in the real existing material world as a source of value for literature and art more generally that both intersect.

Realism

In the introduction to his book *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, Edward Abbey casts his memoir of his stay in what is now Arches National Park in terms of his own poetic realism: "In recording my impressions of the natural scene I have striven above all for accuracy, since I believe that there is a kind of poetry, a kind of truth in simple fact. . . . Not imitation but evocation has been the goal."[46] For its commitment to "evoke" a natural setting, in this case the Utah desert, *Desert Solitaire* is a touchstone of American nature writing.[47] Abbey's location of "a kind of poetry" within the material world he depicts is also an explicit declaration on the part of the author of the kind of referentiality that first wave ecocriticism often regards as the core of a strong environmental orientation.[48] This orientation, in turn, informs the political

[45] This statement about first-wave ecocriticism is more a summary of a stated program than what it achieves in practice. Lance Newman has argued that in the final analysis ecocriticism remains indebted to historiographical idealism as long as it does not engage with social reality. See Newman "Marxism and Ecocriticism," 10. The reason is that the concept of nature itself contains an essential dualism, as Neil Smith argues: on the one hand nature is figured as autonomous to human society but also universal. As universal nature it includes human nature. The external and universal notions are not wholly reconcilable. See Neil Smith, *Uneven Development*, 2.

[46] Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (New York: Touchstone, 1990), xii.

[47] Don Scheese has argued that while Abbey himself may have eschewed the label of "nature writing," *Desert Solitaire* marks a radical politicization of the genre. See Don Scheese, "Desert Solitaire: Counter-Friction to the Machine in the Garden," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 303–322, here 303–306.

[48] Patrick Murphy, for instance, writes, "And I consider ecocriticism a critical method that both evokes the responsibility of the critic and reinstates referentiality as a crucial and primary activity of literature." "Referentiality" for Murphy is a key effect of literature's mimetic capacity on the reader. "Literature can only affect the minds of its readers if it has the ability to orient their thinking not only toward the world in the text but also the world in which the text materially and ideationally exists at the moment of reading." Patrick D. Murphy, *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies: Fences, Boundaries, and Fields* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 1, 4. Lawrence Buell's criteria of what makes a text environmental also add up to "an

stakes of much of the ecocritical interest in nature writing.[49] The enthusiasm for nature writing as an especially environmental genre is one aspect of the field that has become the subject of scrutiny in second wave ecocriticism; Michael Cohen, for instance, refers to ecocriticism that seeks to disseminate the ideas found in nature writing as "the praise-song school,"[50] while others see the celebration of the genre as symptomatic of an unproblematized fixation on literal representation.[51] At stake in ecocritical debates about referentiality is a tension between mimesis and poesis here within the context of late twentieth and early twenty-first century environmental stress.[52]

While the interest in the representation of material reality is ostensibly a repudiation of philosophical abstraction, both in 19th century German realist theory and in contemporary ecocriticism, both are indebted to an idealist notion of the beautiful in the work of art as one that condenses and centralizes the beauty of being. Gerhard Plumpe has argued that this

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environmentally oriented work." Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 7.

[49] "In an increasingly urban society, nature writing plays a vital role in teaching us to value the natural world," Cheryll Glotfelty writes in "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," xxiii.

[50] Michael Cohen, "Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism under Critique," *Environmental History* 9, no. 1 (January 2004): 21–23.

[51] See Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology*, 3–41. Timothy Morton also criticizes such "ecomimesis" because it denies its aesthetic status while being unable to escape its own textuality. "The more convincingly I render my surroundings, the more figurative language I end up with. The more I try to show you what lies beyond this page, the more of a page I have." Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 30. Lawrence Buell points out in his 2005 book that there is a difference between "referentiality" and and the naïve mimesis that is sometimes alleged. "On the one hand, those who decry ecocriticism's retrogression to a pretheoretical trust in art's capacity to mirror the factical world tend to work from a reductive model of mimesis, which, *contra* Phillips, posits refraction but most definitely *not* "sameness," and from a cartoon version of ecocritical neorealists as doggedly hard-hat positivists." Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 32. In fairness, Buell's 1995 book *The Environmental Imagination*, which is Phillips' main target, is careful to avoid a simplistic embrace of mimetic realism at the expense of textuality. "We need to recognize stylization's capacity for what the poet-critic Francis Ponge calls *adéquation*: verbalizations that are not replicas but equivalents of the world of objects, such that writing in some measure bridges the abyss that inevitably yawns between language and the object-world." Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 98. Abbey also is aware that writing can never escape itself to reproduce what is beyond the page. "Language makes a mighty loose net with which to go fishing for simple facts, when facts are infinite. . . . Since you cannot get the desert into a book any more than a fisherman can haul up the sea with his nets, I have tried to create a world of words in which the desert figures more as medium than as material." Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, xii. Hence the difference for Abbey between his goal of "evocation" and mere "imitation."

[52] See Glotfelty "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," xvi.

understanding of the beautiful is the tie that binds German realism as a theoretical discourse to the idealist aesthetics it otherwise finds too speculative;[53] the assumption about the beautiful also underwrites Abbey's claim of a kind of poetry in the factical, an aesthetic quality intrinsic to reality that writing then brings forward. For all of the differences in their historical contexts, German poetic realist theory would have sympathized with the notion that there is poetry in the reality of the material world and in the factical itself. Julian Schmidt, for instance, declares,

> Der Glaube der vergangen Zeit war: das Ideal sei der Wirklichkeit Feind und hebe sie auf; unser Glaube dagegen ist, daß die Idee sich in der Wirklichkeit realisiert, und diesen Glauben halten wir für das Prinzip der Zukunft.
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> The belief of the past was: the ideal is the enemy of reality and suspends it; our belief on the other hand is that the idea realizes itself in reality, and we consider this belief to be the principle of the future").[54]

"Idea" here, like "poetry" is more a keyword than a clearly delineated concept, but what is important is the reason for the terms' deployment. They are invoked to push back against an assumption that realist representation cannot lay claim to artistic status by virtue of the fact that it was not a product of artistic fantasy, but instead of common everyday reality.[55] For Schmidt, there is no separation between the concrete material and the ideal, because,

> Die Idee der Dinge ist auch ihre Realität. Wenn der wahre Idealist mit seiner Idee das Wesen der Dinge trifft, so bildet sich der falsche Idealist eine Idee, die der Wirklichkeit nicht entspricht, weil sie überhaupt keinen Inahlt hat.
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> The ideal of things is also their reality. While the true idealist captures the essence of things, the false idealist constructs an idea that does not correspond to reality

[53] Gerhard Plumpe, "Das Reale und die Kunst: Ästhetische Theorie im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Bürgerlicher Realismus und Gründerzeit: 1848-1890*, ed. Gerhard Plumpe (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1996), 242.

[54] Julian Schmidt, *Bilder aus dem geistigen Leben unserer Zeit* (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1870), 34.

[55] Hence Julian Schmidt's criticism of romanticism: "Abgesehen von vielen andern Paradoxien der Romantiker, die kamen und gingen wie die Luft, z.B. Gespenster sind die Hauptsache, die beste Regierungsform ist der Despotismus, die katholische Kirche ist sehr tiefsinnig, die Rosen singen die gescheiteste Philosophie, u.s.w., gab es ein Stichwort, auf das sie immer zurückkamen: das wirkliche Leben mit seinem ganzen Inhalt, mit seinem Glauben, Hoffen und Lieben ist ekel, schaal und unersprießlich. Wo sie das Ideal suchten, ob in Indien, oder im Mittelalter, oder in der spanischen Inquisitionszeit, oder wo sonst, war daneben gleichgiltig." Julian Schmidt, "Neue Romane," *Die Grenzboten: Zeitschrift für Politik und Literatur* 19, no. 4 (1860): 483.

because it has no content.[56]

German poetic realism and neorealist ecocriticism converge over the poetic status of the material, but diverge ultimately over how the artistic status of a work of art relates to its referential dimension. Ecocriticism espouses a return to and a "revaluing" of the material object-world in its thinking about the work of art as a response to recent environmental degradation. German realist theory, on the other hand, develops a theory of art in response to the social realities of high capitalism and the emergence of the era of art's reproducibility specifically. Where neorealist ecocriticism seeks to recover mimesis in the form of ecocentric "referentiality," mimesis for nineteenth century realism is a problem because it puts realist writing on par with reproductive technologies, such as the photograph and mass media more generally, at a moment when these technologies discredit the artistic possibilities of mimetic representation. Claiming artistic autonomy while striving to represent the world mimetically, "the image of itself that realism thus cultivated turns out to be strangely self-defeating."[57] Arguments such as Julian Schmidt's that the work of art captures the ideal essence in its representation of the material are an attempt to answer the question of how realism can credibly navigate between the mimetic and poetic imperatives. Realist discourse on the ideal culminates in the transfiguration (*Verklärung*) postulate, German realism's answer to the apparent contradiction between realism's mimetic

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[56] Julian Schmidt "Schiller und der Idealismus," *Die Grenzboten: Zeitschrift für Politik und Literatur* 17, no. 4 (1858): 405.

[57] Lilian R. Furst, *All Is True: The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 6–7. Robert Holub's *Reflections of Realism* explores how this self-defeating image of realism gives rise to its own self-reflectiveness. Realism's functioning as a normed discourse does not exclude self-reflection, which often comes in a disguised or indirect form, Holub argues. "In many cases the authors of the text may even be unaware of the status and nature of these comments, and one could therefore say that they exist as an unconscious subtext suppressed by the powerful mechanisms of realist consciousness." For Holub realist texts "are most interesting and most revealing of their historical situatedness at precisely those moments when they begin to reflect upon the precarious nature of their own poetics." Robert C. Holub, *Reflections of Realism: Paradox, Norm, and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century German Prose* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 17.

imperative and its claim to poetic status.[58]

Transfiguration values the material, but casts the process of poesis as the moment when the work of art attains autonomy from the base material through shaping on the part of an artist. As a production aesthetic, it argues that it is in the creation of the artwork that the poetic content of reality emerges.[59] Ecocritical notions of referentiality hold that art generally and writing specifically are poetic and promote good ecoconsciousness in directing the audience back to the earth,[60] here the locus of poesy is within the work itself. That is part of the reason why landscape description is unsatisfactory for Fontane in his essay on Willibald Alexis. For Fontane the recognition that the real possibility for poesy exists within the material is a welcome development after romanticism and idealism, but it is the artist who transforms that potential into reality.[61] There is none of Abbey's faith that the material world itself is artful, and that mimetic representation merely "evokes" a poetic content that is already there. At best mimetic representation, such as that of Christian Daniel Rauch's equestrian sculpture of Friedrich II in Berlin, "gehört jenem Entwicklungsstadium an, durch das wir notwendig hindurch müssen; es ist der nackte, prosaische Realismus, dem noch durchaus die poetische Verklärung fehlt" ("belongs to that developmental stage through which we necessarily had to go; it is the naked, prosaic realism that is entirely missing poetic transfiguration").[62] Robert Prutz likewise rhetorically asks "was ist alle Kunst selbst anders als die ideale Verklärung des Realen, die Aufnahme und

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[58] Theodor Fontane stresses the national quality of *Verklärung* in his review of Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*. "Wessen der Realismus unserer Zeit bedarf, das ist die ideelle Durchdringung. Die Deutschen aber sind unbestritten das Volk der Idee." Fontane, *HFA*, III/1 : 293.

[59] See Claus-Michel Ort "Was ist Realismus?," in *Realismus: Epoche - Autoren - Werke*, ed. Christian Begemann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 21–22.

[60] "Nonfictional nature representation, especially, hinges on its ability to convince us that it is more responsive to the physical world's nuances than most people are, selective though that response may still be." Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 90.

[61] Fontane, HFA III/1 : 241.

[62] Ibid., 237.

Wiedergeburt der Wirklichkeit in dem ewig unvergänglichen Reiche des Schönen?" ("what is art but the ideal transfiguration of the real, the assumption and rebirth of reality in the eternal and everlasting realm of the beautiful?").[63] Transfiguration synthesizes the poles of mimesis and poesis. Again Robert Prutz:

> Entbehrt, wir wiederholen es, kann keine von beiden werde; weder der abstracte Idealismus, der sich um die Wirklichkeit der Dinge nicht kümmert, kann ein Kunstwerk schaffen, noch ragt der brutale Realismus, der nichts weiter weiß und will als eben diese gemeine Wirklichkeit der Dinge, jemals hinauf in die heiteren Höhen der Kunst.
>
> We repeat: neither of the two can be done without; neither abstract idealism, which cares nothing for the reality of things, can produce a work of art, nor can brute realism that neither knows nor wants anything but the common reality of things rise to the bright peaks of art.[64]

Transfiguration is a process of artistic "Läuterung" ("refining")[65] that carves out an autonomy for the work of art against competing realist forms, such as photographs or reportage on the one hand, as well as against the ecosocial reality it portrays. It is as such as much a product of the compromised position of the bourgeoisie after 1848 as it is a binding statement on what constitutes a work of art.[66] Aside from the political implications of transfiguration as the organizing principle of the realist project, its problem as a theory of art is that it descends into a circular logic: what defines the true work of art from other representational media is that the artist made it as a work of art. But what is more important here is that the texts I will examine in this dissertation raise and seek to work through the same questions that the transfiguration postulate seeks to answer, so that together they constitute a dialogue that persists through the end

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63 Robert Prutz, *Die deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart. 1848 bis 1858.*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Leipzig: Ernst Julius Günther, 1870), 58–59.

64 Ibid.

65 Fontane, *HFA*, III/1 : 241.

66 See Sabine Becker's discussion of *Verklärung* and its ideological dimensions in *Bürgerlicher Realismus: Literatur und Kultur im bürgerlichen Zeitalter 1848-1900* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2003), 102–110.

of the century and is kept open by the changing environmental reality.[67] Insofar as the texts I examine expand the question to include ecosocial reality, the question becomes one of the conditions of possibility for realist poesy with the deleterious environmental consequences of industrialization and bureaucratization in the nineteenth century.

Environmental transformation poses a kind of roadblock to the extent that it unbalances the claim to artistic autonomy that is supposed to be the end of transfiguration as a process. Whether the text encounters smog or a cesspool, or whether environmental transformation is a process that the narrator celebrates, physical changes to the earth under the sign of high capital mark the reassertion of prosaic social relations within a poetic project that aims to transcend the material. It is not only, or even primarily, that environmental degradation is ugly, because the ugly would be something that necessarily must be confronted in a process of poetic "refining." One possible "bad" outcome that occupies poetic realist theory is that we are left with the realism of a photograph or reportage, a work that would represent its subject realistically, but without glimpsing a harmonious totality and *Lebenspraxis* beyond empirical reality.[68] In doing so, it merely inverts the problem of idealism. Hence a criticism like that of Emil Homberger against Gustave Flaubert:

> Wie der Idealismus welcher den Boden der realen Welt verläßt zu luftiger Phantasterei wird, so sinkt der Realismus, welcher die Wirklichkeit, den Stoff, nicht durch das Ideal vergeistigt, zum plumpen Materialismus herab.

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[67] The theoretical reflections emerging from the representation of environmental depredation therefore are less symptomatic of the self-defeating image of realism and more revealing of the dual nature of poetic realism, springing from the fact that realist literary texts are both grounded in dominant discourse but also resist it to produce what Eric Downing calls the "self-conscious, somewhat self-deconstructive dimension that is intrinsic to realism." Eric Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 13.

[68] "Die Kunsttheorie des *Grenzboten*-Kreises geht aus von der Hoffnung auf eine bessere, noch zu verwirklichende Lebenspraxis, die in der Kunst antizipiert wird. Die Kunst kann wahrnehmen, was in der Wirklichkeit erst in Ansätzen vorhanden ist." Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Literarische Kultur im Zeitalter des Liberalismus 1830-1870* (München: C.H. Beck, 1985), 1985 : 131.

> Just as idealism leaves the ground of the real world for airy fantasy, so too does any realism that does not infuse material reality with spirit sink back down to blunt materialism.[69]

As a facet of prosaic reality the social production of nature drags the realist text back down to earth, or, in the context of this argument, back down to *the* earth.

In considering realist aesthetics, both as a discourse dominant in the years immediately following the 1848 revolutions as well as a project at work in the literary texts, I wish to emphasize that I do not mean to suggest that the programmatic side of the critics' or the authors' statements on art are necessarily binding for their literary praxis. Instead realism is a dialogical movement whose programmatic side in post-1848 literary criticism serves as one critical pole in the aesthetic reflections that the literary texts develop. Viewed from this angle the post-1848 era is less about the coalescence and dissolution of realism as an aesthetic and epistemological paradigm. Instead realism's "period of influence"[70] is one of an evolving and dynamic dialogue on the conditions of possibility for poetic realist representation. What keeps the dialogue alive is the realist text's "dual accountability to matter and to discursive mentation"[71] at a time when the social character of the material world is increasingly marked by the domination of nature under high capitalist social relations. It is because of the dynamics of the shifting ecosocial reality that transfiguration can never be the normative, totalizing theory of art that is presented in the programmatic texts. But the significance of the ecosocial conditions that the texts encounter make the realia of realism all the more significant, creating a tension with the "departure from reality" that the general discrediting of literature's mimetic function effects.[72] The significance of

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[69] Emil Homberger, "[Gustave Flaubert]," in *Theorie des bürgerlichen Realismus: Eine Textsammlung*, ed. Gerhard Plumpe (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997), 198–199.

[70] Becker, Bürgerlicher Realismus, 95–96.

[71] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 92.

[72] Christiane Arndt defines this "Abschied" thus: "Auf theoretischer Ebene geht das Abschiednehmen von der Wirklichkeit einher mit einer Veränderung der Begrifflichkeit, die die literarische Entwicklung, während der der

the environment as a site of poetological reflection makes material reality of even greater consequence as the texts respond to an increasingly dominated nature.

Chapter Overview

The story this dissertation tells is of the poetic problems flowing from an increasing domination of nature. All of the texts I examine think in one way or another about the historical "conquest of nature." As David Blackbourn argues in his book, the title of which draws on conquest of nature as historical parlance, "To write about the shaping of the modern German landscape is to write about how modern Germany itself was shaped."[73] The arc this dissertation traces is from a utopian vision of helping amoral nature to become more natural to the first emergence of a geological epoch now informally referred to as the Anthropocene.

Chapter one looks at two novellas from Adalbert Stifter's *Studien*, *Abdias* (1842, revised 1847) and *Brigitta* (1844, revised 1847). Both of these novellas, first drafted early in Stifter's literary career, turn on the human ordering of nature in the form of cultivation. The work done on the environment in these novellas is part of an ethical project of human improvement – Stifter holds to a notion of *cultura agri* as *cultura animi*. While these ideas about the production of nature circulate in many of Stifter's stories well into his very late works, I am interested in *Abdias* and *Brigitta* because both put forward a set of theoretical reflections that preface the actual narratives, and both are important developments on the way to Stifter's most important

Begriff ›Mimesis‹ durch den der Repräsentation abgelöst wird. Dabei bezeichnet Mimesis eine hinsichtlich des Wirklichkeitsbezugs noch weitgehend unproblematisierte (wenn auch nicht unproblematische) Funktion des literarischen Textes, während der Repräsentationsbegriff einhersetzt mit der Krise dessen, was er bezeichnet. . . ." Christiane Arndt, *Abschied von der Wirklichkeit Probleme bei der Darstellung von Realität im deutschsprachigen literarischen Realismus* (Freiburg, Br: Rombach, 2009), 16–17.

[73] David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York, NY: Norton, 2006), 9.

statement of his poetic agenda, the preface to the 1852 novella cycle *Bunte Steine* (*Mutli-colored Stones*). In both novellas the cultivation of nature promises to provide a glimpse into a more noumenal reality that guarantees the perceptible – what Stifter will call in the 1852 preface the "*sanftes Gesez*" or "gentle law." The key factor that undercuts the project are that it is always predicated on a questioning of the existence of the world sustaining reality that the cultivation of nature is supposed to make visible. This would seem to undercut the entire realist enterprise, with the production of nature as the epicenter from which Stifter's aesthetics ruptures. But a consideration of the theoretical prefaces to both *Abdias* and *Brigitta* will illustrate that this is really indicative of the self-skepticism and irony that is ultimately a pillar of Stifter's realism.

The ethical utopia at the heart of the cultivation of nature and thus of Stifter's realism is no longer possible in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Chapter two considers the images of environmental depredation in two of Wilhelm Raabe's Brauschweig novels, *Pfisters Mühle* (*Pfister's Mill*) of 1884 and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* (*The Bridsong Papers*) of 1896. The narratives of both novels are grounded in the reality of environmental depredation, such as the dumping of beet sugar effluent into the mill stream in the former and the urbanization of the Vogelsang neighborhood in the latter. Environmental depredation in the novels catalyzes a critical reflection on the status of art in general under the sign of industrial modernity and on the legacy of poetic realism in particular. This is not to say that poetic realism ends with the late Raabe or is entirely discredited. *Pfisters Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* instead occupy liminal places between a received literary tradition and the very negation thereof that produces the formal openness of both texts and informs their critique of industrial capital.

If the poetic project is an abortive one for Wilhelm Raabe, the social production of nature

for Theodor Fontane is the means to overcoming a negative judgment of the environment's poetic character. Turning to Theodor Fontane's 1898 novel *Der Stechlin (The Stechlin*) in chapter three, I show that the text locates poesy not outside a set of modern social relations, as Raabe's narrators tend to do, but in the surprising collapse of the distinction between human and natural histories on a global scale. Because this collapse is a transregional phenomenon, and because it is precipitated by the human traces left on the earth, the reality that is poetically transfigured is the reality of an emerging Anthropocene. Its intersection with the supposedly remote regions of the March Brandenburg lends a poetic character to a space otherwise judged as being one of "poetic barrenness." We see in Fontane's last finished novel numerous continuities from his statements on poetic realism in "Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848" ("Our Lyric and Epic Poetry since 1848"), statements that echo through subsequent public and private remarks on realist aesthetics. But even as it intervenes in the questioning about poesy and modernity that poetic realism raises, it marks a continuation of a dialogue even as it shifts the grounds of the relation of environmental transformation to realist transfiguration.

CHAPTER 1
Producing Nature, Preserving the World: Adalbert Stifter

The project of poeticizing the material world assumes an especially strongly pronounced moral and aesthetic dimension for Adalbert Stifter. The end point of the process of artistic formation of empirical reality in the realist work, Stifter argues in the preface to his 1852 novella cycle *Bunte Steine* (*Many-colored Stones*), is to make visible the general, world preserving moral order, which we glimpse in the small and particular of the perceptible world. It posits a model of the universe wherein all of reality is vouched for by a higher instance, a divinely ordained "gentle law." The harmonious moral order of the universe becomes visible in the small and particular through the process of production and the consequential shift in the environment from a wild, uncultivated nature to an ordered nature. Human work cultivating fields, straightening rivers, and maintaining ordered estates is central to the ethical utopian vision of self-realization through work on the environment, and accords too with a realism of Julian Schmidt and Gustav Freytag wherein the representation of labor anticipates in the literary text a harmonious mode of existence not yet realized in material reality.[74] Environmental transformation exists between two poles of nature, transformation as harmonious world appropriation, and a darker undercurrent that casts a skeptical light on what Stifter understands to be the world-preserving revealed through work on nature.[75]

In this chapter I argue that the social production of nature for Stifter binds the utopian

[74] Hohendahl, *Literarische Kultur*, 131. See also Holub, *Reflections of Realism*, 174–178.

[75] "So bricht sich der Wunsch und der Wille nach einem "sanften Gesetz" sowohl an der Gewalttätigkeit der Natur als auch an den Forderungen des Sittengesetzes, und diese Gewaltherrschaft ist als dunkle Unterströmung in den Stifterschen Texten anwesend und taucht deren Oberfläche in ein Zwielicht von Menschlichkeit und Unmenschlichkeit." Alfred Doppler, "Schrecklich Schöne Welt? Stifters Fragwürdige Analogie von Natur- Und Sittengesetz," in *Adalbert Stifters Schrecklich Schöne Welt (Eine Koproduktion von Germanistische Mitteilungen Und Jahrbuch Des Adalbert-Stifter Instituts)* (Linz: Adalbert-Stifter-Institut, 1994), 11.

ethical-moral order that sustains the universe to the counterforce that moves against the model of reality each text puts forward. The noumenal, world preserving that serves as a guarantor for perceptible reality is called the "gentle law" in the 1852 preface, in the 1847 version of *Brigitta* it takes the form of the "cheerful abyss," while in *Abdias* (1842/1844) it is present in the metaphor of the "chain of flowers." On the one hand the images of ordered nature that the texts present stage the realist aesthetic program diegetically, inasmuch as they make visible the situatedness of Stifter's things within the harmonious general order of the universe. In other words, the production of nature is a realist project in its own right. At the same time ordered nature functions as a nexus that brings together both the image of a harmonious totality with the material and theoretical elements that rupture the image of reality that Stifter's realism advances. One possible deduction is that cultivated nature becomes a sight of the bad faith at work in the realist text.[76] It is true that we not only detect the fissures in Stifter's realism within social nature, but that the production of nature creates the very conditions by which Stifter's model of reality threatens to unravel. I will argue instead that the dual impulses visible in the production of nature generate the dual nature of poetic realism, the "self-conscious, somewhat self-deconstructive dimension intrinsic to realism."[77] In the case of Stifter, the dual nature is also critical source of

[76] The bad faith, in this instance, is related to, but not identical to, what Lillian Furst calls the self-defeating image of realism, where the espoused mimesis comes at the expense of the poetic imperative (6-7). Instead it is about the narrative exclusion of whatever threatens the text's reflective nature, an act of repression that is always only partial, as Robert Holub argues in his reading of *Brigitta.* See Robert C. Holub, "Adalbert Stifter's *Brigitta*, or the Lesson of Realism," in *A Companion to German Realism: 1848-1900*, ed. Todd Kontje (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 39–40.

[77] Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction*, 13. Christian Begemann likewise writes of Stifter, "Mit dem hermeneutischen Begriff einer Einheit des Sinns läßt Stifters Texten nicht beikommen, und das macht ihre besondere Schwierigkeit aus. . . . Eine Aufhebung oder Synthese der auseinanderstrebenden Linien ist nirgends in Sicht. Die Textoberfläche zeigt sich vielmehr als ein Feld mit mehreren Kristallisations- und Kraftzentren unterschiedlicher Intensität, als Resultat von Strukturierungsvorgängen, in denen verschiedene Impulse am Werk sind." Christian Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen: Stifter-Lektüren* (Weimar: Metzler Verlag, 1995), 164.

irony in the texts, bringing the program into a state of suspension.[78] In this chapter I begin by looking primarily at the preface to *Bunte Steine* before turning to two stories from Stifter's studies, *Brigitta* and *Abdias*.

Social Nature and the Order of Reality in Stifter's Poetics

Social nature is normative nature for Stifter. It is normative because of its relation to the overall realist project, because it makes visible a totality that humans might otherwise fail to recognize. Even so, the equation of produced nature with normative nature seems counterintuitive, especially from the perspective of an environmentalism that assumes that "nature seems safest when shielded from human labor."[79] From such a standpoint the work done on the material world amounts to a transgression because the human demands of the moment are satisfied at the cost of earth systems that sustain life in the long term, elevating the small scale demands of one species above the long term stability of the planet. But Stifter's ascription of moral value to social nature does not entail such a magnification of the human, at least not in theory. The difference instead is twofold: first there is the question of what truly constitutes the large and the small in Stifter's conception of reality, and second his vision of the human relation to nature.

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[78] See Jochen Berendes' account of Stifter and irony. He writes of the state of suspension (*Schwebezustand*): "Die zentrale poetologische Kategorie der Frühromantik, das *Schweben*, findet sich im Werk Stifters an zentralen Stellen anschaulich inszeniert: als Suspension der räumlichen und zugleich gesellschaftlich vermittelten (bzw. Gesellschaft vermittelnden) Ordnung und Hierarchie. Das Schweben wird dabei stets in seiner Ambivalenz erfaßt: als ein befreiender Triumph und als ängstigende Orientierungslosigkeit. Beobachter und Beobachtetes scheinen zweideutig zu ihrem Heil und Unheil zugleich aus vertrauten Bezügen freigesetzt zu sein. Stifter, der vermeintliche Ordnungsfanatiker, sucht offenbar in seinen Texten nach Konstellationen, in denen sich vertraute Kontexte in einen Widerstreit auflösen und einzelnes bezuglos frei im Raum zu schweben scheint." Jochen Berendes, *Ironie - Komik - Skepsis: Studien zum Werk Adalbert Stifters* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2009), 7.

[79] Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 172.

Two moments in Stifter's 1857 novel *Der Nachsommer* (*Indian Summer*) illustrate both the issue of scale and of the human relation to nature. The first is in the chapter "Die Erweiterung" ("Broadening the Horzions"), when Heinrich Drendorf is walking through the countryside thinking about geological time scales. The ephemerality of the topography, constantly being transformed by geological processes, relativizes both the landscape Drendorf sees as well as the work of art, given that the sculptures at the Rose House are made up of material that the earth produced over the course of eons.[80] From these reflections on art and geological time he comes to a claim about the deep time of the earth as the horizon for a total reality, one that is the source material for narrative.

> Wenn eine Geschichte des Nachdenkens und Forschens werth ist, so ist es die Geschichte der Erde, die ahnungsreichste, die reizendste, die es gibt, eine Geschichte, in welcher die der Menschen nur ein Einschiebsel ist, und wer weiß es, welch ein kleines, da sie von anderen Geschichten vielleicht höherer Wesen abgelöset werden kann. Die Quellen zu der Geschichte der Erde bewahrt sie selber wie in einem Schriftengewölbe in ihrem Innern auf, Quellen, die vielleicht in Millionen Urkunden niedergelegt sind, und bei denen es nur darauf ankömmt, daß wir sie lesen lernen, und sie durch Eifer und Rechthaberei nicht verfälschen. Wer wird diese Geschichte einmal klar vor Augen haben? Wird eine solche Zeit kommen, oder wird sie nur der immer ganz wissen, der sie von Ewigkeit her gewußt hat? [81]

> If any history is worth pondering, worth investigating, it is the history of the Earth, the most promising, the most stimulating history there is, a history where man is only an interpolation, who knows how small a one, and can be superseded by other histories of perhaps higher beings. The Earth itself preserves the sources of this history in its innermost parts just as in a room for records, sources inscribed in perhaps millions of documents; it is only a matter of our learning to read and not falsify them by eagerness or obstinacy. Who will one day have this history clearly before his eyes? Will ever such a time come, or will only He know it completely Who has known it for all Eternity?[82]

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[80] Adalbert Stifter, *Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1982), 4,2 : 30. For the English translation see Adalbert Stifter, *Indian Summer*, trans. Wendell W. Frye, 2nd ed (Bern ; New York: P. Lang, 1999), 191.

[81] Stifter, HKG, 32–33.

[82] Stifter, *Indian Summer*, 192.

Since realism lays claim to an objective truth as well as to poesy, "Geschichte" has to be understood both in terms of "history" and "story." Even as the history of the earth is the history that is worth investigating, it is not the ultimate horizon of reality. Drendorf invokes the "book of nature" topos to figure the earth as a vast archive that can be read from a vantage point outside of planetary boundaries. Taken at face value, the subordination of human history to the much vaster past and future of the planet assumes a non-anthropocentric world view, as humans are only a small entry in a vast archive that to them is only ever partially accessible by virtue of their limitations as readers. While there may come a time when humans, too, can read the earth, the planet is not an archive that exists for human understanding. It is most legible instead to some higher, future reader – one who has the omniscient perspective of God (although Stifter tantalizingly does not specify God as the only possible reader). As was the case in the preface to *Bunte Steine*, the earth as archive model assumes greater reality that sustains immediate experience, a reality that operates on a slower time scale, its presence manifest in the seemingly small. The material of the work of art integrates it into this archive. It would be wrong to deduce from these reflections on the earth that the form of the work of art is subordinate to the material; instead the work of art in Stifter's view is an instance of the human ordering of nature for having been formed in an aesthetic process immanent with nature.[83]

The harmonious ordering of nature makes humans – or rather, certain humans – more than an "interpolation" in the history of the earth. In *Nachsommer* Freiherr von Risach embodies what the production of nature should look like for Stifter, and here human history looks less like a mere "interpolation. Much earlier in the novel, in the chapter "Der Abschied" ("The

[83] "Immer wieder wird der künstlerische Prozeß bei Stifter darum als ein organisches „Wachstum" geschildert, das von einem intentionalen „Machen" abgehoben wird, das als solches schon in die Nähe der „Manier" rückt. Das wahrhafte Kunstwerk, zum Beispiel der eigene ‚Nachsommer', erscheint als ein völlig naturwüchsiges Gebilde mit Wurzeln, Blüte und Frucht." Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen: Stifter-Lektüren*, 1995 : 12–13.

Departure") Risach delivers a lengthy speech on the functioning of his garden. Successful gardening for Risach is a matter of treating things according to their intrinsic natures, a maxim that also informs Stifter's conservatism, especially after 1848.[84] But the end of the moral regard for nature is to manipulate nature into following the will of the gardener, providing him an experience of natural beauty.

> Wenn [der Vogel] jung oder sogar alt gefangen wird, vergißt er sich und sein Leid, wird ein Hin- und Widerhüpfer in kleinem Raume, da er sonst einen großen brauchte, und singt seine Weise; aber dieser Gesang ist ein Gesang der Gewohnheit, nicht der Lust. Wir haben an unserm Garten einen ungeheuren Käfich ohne Draht Stangen und Vogelthürchen, in welchem der Vogel vor außerordentlicher Freude, der er sich so leicht hingibt, singt, in welchem wir das Zusammentönen vieler Stimmen hören können, das in einem Zimmer beisammen nur ein Geschrei wäre, und in welchem wir endlich die häusliche Wirthschaft der Vögel und ihre Geberden sehen können, die so verschieden sind und oft dem tiefsten Ernste ein Lächeln abgewinnen können. . . . [Die Leute] wollen dieselben genießen, sie wollen sie recht nahe genießen, und da sie keinen Käfich mit unsichtbaren Drähten und Stangen machen können, wie wir, in dem sie das eigentliche Wesen das Vogels wahrnehmen könnten, so machen sie einen mit sichtbaren, in welchem der Vogel eingesperrt ist, und seinem zu frühen Tode entgegen singt.[85]
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> If [the bird] is caught young or even old, he forgets himself and his misery, becomes a creature that hops back and forth in a small space when he otherwise needed a large one, and sings his song; but this song is one of habit, not of joy. Our grounds are actually a colossal cage without wire, bars or doors where the birds sing from an extraordinary joy that comes to them so readily, where we hear a medley of many voices which would only be a discordant scream in a room together, and where we can observe the birds' housekeeping and behavior which is so different and can often make us smile even when things are gloomiest. . . . People want to enjoy them; they want to enjoy them from up close, and since they are incapable of making a cage with invisible wire and bars where they could observe the true nature of the birds, they make a visible cage in which the bird is locked and sings until his premature death.[86]

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[84] "Reverence for the natural being of objects is not only an artistic, but also a political maxim: common to both is the conservative stance which invoked the notion of a God-given organic necessity. Thus, if Stifter in his art is at pains, both in thematic and stylistic terms, to enshrine gradualness as a moral and artistic value, he provides what he sees as the necessary corrective to the turmoil of his times." Martin Swales and Erika Swales, *Adalbert Stifter: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 12.

[85] Stifter, HKG, 4,1 : 161.

[86] Stifter, *Indian Summer*, 95–96.

The bird's "natural" song is made possible only because of Risach's soft Prometheanism. He builds his garden to harmoniously synthesize the intractable qualities of natural phenomena with his rationalistic planning of the estate garden.[87] Still, the contradictions within the project of harmoniously producing here are only thinly veiled, especially when Risach states that his garden amounts to an invisible cage.[88] The bird sings naturally only because it does not recognize the reality of its unfreedom, or more, that it is complicit in its unfreedom for its failure to recognize that it lives in a produced environment so designed as to keep it contained for human pleasure. This is a key irony in Stifter's conception of nature: we know that the bird's circumstances are "unnatural." But if the bird behaves in the garden as it would in a forest because it does not recognize the difference, then its song is no less "natural" because the humans have information about its circumstances that the bird does not. Risach's garden is not an alternative to the domination of nature, he has simply found a way to control nature on nature's own terms. From the perspective of contemporary ecological discourse his garden as an image of environmental sustainability in all its consequences. Aldo Leopold's famous land ethic holds that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."[89] In Risach's monologue we see how such an

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87 "Stifter redet also keineswegs einem kontemplativen Inaktivismus das Wort. Es gehört für ihn vielmehr zum Wesen des Menschen, daß er in die Wirklichkeit eingreift und sie planvoll verändert, jedoch nicht, um sie seinen Zwecken dienstbar zu machen, sondern um die in ihr angelegten Möglichkeiten ans Licht zu bringen." Hans Dietrich Irmscher, *Adalbert Stifter: Wirklichkeitserfahrung und gegenständliche Darstellung* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1971), 115.

88 "Stifters Ideal der ‚sanften' Kultivierung der Natur ist nicht nur ästhetischen, sondern auch ethischen, oft sogar bereits ‚ökologischen' Voraussetzungen verpflichtet, mit denen es zwangsläufig in Konflikt gerät und dadurch Widersprüche erzeugt, was besonders die zahlreichen Umpflanzungs-Motive belegen." Herwig Gottwald, "Beobachtungen zum Motiv des Landschaftsgartens bei Stifter," in *Stifter-Studien: Ein Festgeschenk für Wolfgang Frühwald zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Hettche, Johannes John, and Sibylle von Steinsdorf (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 133.

89 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches from Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 224–225.

ethic can be integrated into a program of disempowering nature.[90]

The ethical weight Stifter lends this soft domination of nature shows that while human history may be an "interpolation" in the scale of the earth and the universe itself, human agency is the means by which nature realizes its own normative naturalness. The reason is that if the particular seems to obscure the general, then the fault is with the perceptual limitations of the human viewer, and not with the things in the environment.[91] The production of nature for Stifter therefore is a part of the privileging of vision in his realist aesthetics, and less about nature for its own sake.[92] The project of making visible a higher order reality is a project that coalesces in the *Studien* especially and finds its most direct articulation in the preface to *Bunte Steine.* The preface is a reaction especially to Hebbels' critiques of Stifter, wherein he alleged that Stifter's focus on detail, particularly on detailed description of nature, loses sight of the larger set of historical relations that the realist text is supposed to bring forth.[93] Stifter opens the preface with

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[90] See Christian Begemann, "Natur und Kultur. Überlegungen zu einem durchkreuzten Gegensatz im Werk Adalbert Stifters," *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts* 1 (1994): 42. In his book *Die Welt der Zeichen* Begemann also writes "Stifters vielzitierte »Ehrfurcht vor den Dingen« (PRA 8.1, 83) gilt keineswegs diesen in ihrem materiellen Dasein, sondern nur ihrer »Wesenheit«, ihrem Telos, ihrer Bedeutung. Diese Entwertung kommt indirekt, aber unverkennbar auch im Erzählablauf im Großen zum Ausdruck, der ja vorführt, wie aus dem »Nichts« eines quasi leeren Raums überhaupt erst Etwas wird. So baut die Erzählung einen Gegensatz von Kultur und gegebener Natur auf, der zugleich in der Unterordnung der Kultur unter eine ›wesentliche‹ Natur ausgelöscht wird." Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen: Stifter-Lektüren*, 273–274.

[91] "[Stifter's] theoretical method of arriving at the truly great – what Stifter will also call the 'whole' as well as the 'universal' and 'world-maintaining,' all of which can be summarized in the famous phrase 'the gentle law' - does not consist in a hermeneutics of particularity; rather, Stifter advocates a quasi-scientific procedure for answering the dilemma of vision, of how to see the 'invisible,' by collecting the everyday and ordinary in order to abstract from them toward something higher." Paul Fleming, *Exemplarity and Mediocrity: The Art of the Average from Bourgeois Tragedy to Realism* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), 140.

[92] "Stifter thematisiert in seinen Schilderungen die Wahrnehmung als eine autonome Bewußtseinsart mit, seine Naturdarstellung impliziert stets die Subjektvität als die Perspektive, in der Natur als objektive Wirklichkeit erscheint." Wolfgang Preisendanz, "Die Erzählfunktion der Naturdarstellung bei Stifter," *Wirkendes Wort* 16, no. 6 (December 1966): 410. See also Downing, *Double Exposures,* 32.

[93] See Hebbel's review of *Der Nachsommer* in Hebbel, *Werke*, Vol. 3 : 682–683. The same criticism informs the "Komma im Frack" essay, also a polemic against Stifter. "Weil das Moos sich viel ansehnlicher ausnimmt, wenn der Maler sich um den Baum nicht bekümmert, und der Baum ganz anders hervortritt, wenn der Wald verschwindet, so entsteht ein allgemeiner Jubel, und Kräfte, die eben für das Kleinleben der Natur ausreichen und sich auch instinktiv die Aufgabe nicht höher stellen, werden weit über andere erhoben, die den Mückentanz schon darum nicht schildern, weil er neben dem Planetentanz gar nicht sichtbar ist. Da fängt das »Nebenbei« überall an zu florieren; der Kot auf Napoleons Stifeln wird, wenn es sich um den großen Abdikationsmoment des

the provocative statement that if it is true that he always represents the small, then he is now ready "den Lesern noch eine Kleineres und Unbedeutenderes anzubieten" ("still smaller and less significant").[94] The provocation of the opening notwithstanding, the point of Stifter's preface is precisely the deceptiveness of distinctions between great and small.

> Das Wehen der Luft das Rieseln das Wassers das Wachsen der Getreide das Wogen des Meeres das Grünen der Erde das Glänzen des Himmels das Schimmern der Gestirne halte ich für groß: das prächtig einherziehende Gewitter, den Bliz, welcher Häuser spaltet, den Sturm, der die Brandung treibt, den feuerspeienden Berg, das Erdbeben, welches Länder verschüttet, halte ich nicht für größer als obige Erscheinungen, ja ich halte sie für kleiner, weil sie nur Wirkungen viel höherer Geseze sind.[95]
>
> The flow of the air, the rippling of the water, the growth of the grain, the waves of the sea, the greening of the earth, the gleaming of the sky, the twinkling of the stars I consider great; the splendidly rising storm, the lightning that splits houses, the tempest that drives the surf, the fire-spewing mountain, the earthquake that buries whole countries, I consider not to be greater than the former phenomena; indeed, I consider them smaller because they are only effects of much higher laws.[96]

The reality Stifter argues for here is one of cause and effect, where what we perceive in the immediate world is only an expression of laws that govern the universe, laws that, in turn, ultimately constitute the totality of reality. Stifter's examples are all drawn from nature, but the revolutions of 1848 make up the subtext that informs the images of volcanoes, houses destroyed by lightning, and countries buried by earthquakes. In any event, natural catastrophes are only seemingly small as a mere expression of the higher reality that sustains the realm of the immediately perceptible.

Sie kommen auf einzelnen Stellen vor, und sind die Ergebnisse einseitiger

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Helden handelt, ebenso ängstlich treu gemalt, wie der Seelenkampf auf seinem Gesicht. . ." Hebbel, *Werke*, Vol. 3 : 685.

94 Stifter, HKG, 2,2 : 9. Adalbert Stifter, "Preface to Many-colored Stones," in German Novellas of Realism, ed. Jeffrey Sammons, vol. I (New York: Continuum, 1989), 1.

95 Stifter, HKG, 2,2 : 10.

96 Stifter, "Preface to Many-colored Stones," 2.

> Ursachen. Die Kraft, welche die Milch im Töpfchen der armen Frau empor schwellen und übergehen macht, ist es auch, die die Lava in dem feuerspeienden Berge empor treibt und auf den Flächen der Berge hinabgleiten läßt. Nur augenfälliger sind diese Erscheinungen und reißen den Blick des Unkundigen und Unaufmerksamen mehr an sich, während der Geisteszug des Forschers vorzüglich auf das Ganze und Allgemeine geht und nur in ihm Großartigkeit zu erkennen vermag, weil es allein das Welterhaltende ist. Die Einzelheiten gehen vorüber, und ihre Wirkungen sind nach kurzem kaum erkennbar.[97]
>
> They appear at isolated places and are the results of one-sided causes. The force that makes the milk in the poor woman's pot surge up and overflow is the same one that drives up the lava in the fire-spewing mountain and makes it flow down the mountainsides. These phenomena are only more conspicuous and catch the eye of the ignorant and inattentive, while the mental processes of the true observer tend primarily to the whole and the general and can recognize magnificence only in them, for they alone sustain the world. The details pass away and in a short time their effects can hardly still be recognized.[98]

This is the problem of perception for Stifter, that naïve people see singular acts of destruction and confuse the exceptional with the regular, and thereby misapprehend reality and the common force behind everything they perceive. What is needed, in other words, is the perspective of Heinrich Drendorf wandering through the landscape contemplating deep time. And here is where the figure of the researcher makes his entrance. What differentiates the researcher from the "ignorant and inattentive" is where he directs his attention, namely to the large and the general which manifests itself over longer time scales. The status of the natural disaster – already diminished for being an expression of something else – is further diminished because its effects are negligible when measured against the cumulative effects of the *seemingly* small. Stifter's example is the man with the compass recording the direction of magnetic north. The ignorant and inattentive see an eccentric focus on the detail, but the genuine import of this pursuit becomes apparent when the tiny deviations recorded by many people doing the same reveal the entire

[97] Stifter, HKG, 2,2 : 10.
[98] Stifter, "Preface to Many-colored Stones," 2.

planet to be in the midst of an electrical storm. The insignificant pursuit suddenly evokes awe and enthusiasm because it registers the existence of the general through the meticulous accumulation of particulars. Just as science is limited to the collecting of small details, moving "Körnchen nach Körnchen"("grain upon grain") towards a general it can only ever partially glimpse, so too is the artist limited in what he can represent, "wir auch in unseren Werkstätten [können] nur das Einzelne darstellen . . ., nie das Allgemeine, denn dies wäre die Schöpfung" ("we, too, in our workshops can only represent the particular, never the general, for that would be all Creation").[99]

Stifter's name for this general force is the "sanfte Gesez" ("gentle law"), and the task of realist narrative is to glimpse the gentle law in the particular phenomena. "Wir wollen das sanfte Gesez zu erbliken suchen, wodurch das menschliche Geschlecht geleitet wird"("We want to try to observe the gentle law that guides the human race").[100] In searching for the general that manifests itself in the natural and the social spheres, the realist artist ends up on the side of the researcher, observing the particular world with knowledge that the individual things have meaning within a larger context. The model of reality that the gentle law presents is a composite of two historical models of reality identified by Hans Blumenberg: one of guaranteed reality, wherein God serves as the third instance and absolute witness that validates human knowledge, and of an open model in which reality is the result of a successive process of realization, in which the consistency of the universe is never closed or complete.[101] The metaphor of grains opens up a reality that from a strictly empirical standpoint does not yet amount to a totality, and

[99] Stifter, HKG, 2,2 : 11. Stifter, "Preface to Many-colored Stones," 2-3.
[100] Stifter, HKG, 2,2 : 12. Stifter, "Preface to Many-colored Stones," 3.
[101] As Blumenberg points out, it is not the case that concepts of reality do away with each other over time, "sondern daß die Ausschöpfung ihrer Implikationen, die Überforderung ihrer Befragungstoleranzen in die Neufundierung treiben." Hans Blumenberg, "Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Möglichkeit des Romans," in Ästhetische und metaphorologische Schriften, ed. Anselm Haverkamp (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001), 52.

this is the point at which the figure of the researcher and the realist artist part again, because the latter is after a reality whose meaning and coherency is supplied by a general world-preserving force. Because creation, and the gentle law that structures it, can never be entirely known, we are left with the possibility of being stuck only at the level of the particular. Stifter appeals to an ideal instance against that possibility, but the persistence of that possibility means that the notion of the gentle law is predicated upon the "perceived fragility and even fictionality of that appeal, the awareness of the empirically resistant, frustrating 'reality.'" [102] The paradox, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, is also visible in the produced environments that we encounter in the texts. We will see this, for instance, in the wolf scene at the climax of *Brigitta*, in the images of ruination in *Abdias*, but also in the absolute human control over nature in Risach's garden in *Nachsommer*. In each case the "social" and the "natural" appear to relate in a barely repressed antagonism as much as in a harmonious totality.[103]

The problem of seeing the ideal totality of the soft law in external nature is only half of what is at stake in the production of nature for Stifter. What makes the Rose House in *Nachsommer* an ecosocial utopia is not just that Risach creates the conditions for nature to harmoniously be itself, but that in so doing he also achieves the state of moral peace with himself and his surroundings that the novel figures as a second youth, the *Nachsommer* that lends the

[102] Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction*, 31. "Realism becomes a matter not of scientifically recording what is there but of religiously believing in what is not." See Downing *Double Exposures* 31. Downing argues that God functions to complete the totality that Stifter argues for in the preface to *Bunte Steine*, but as Paul Fleming points out, his function is actually the opposite: "God doesn't guarantee knowledge, but the impossibility of its completion." Fleming, *Exemplarity and Mediocrity*, 146. As I will show in the case of *Brigitta* and *Abdias*, it is also possible that God is not the highest order of reality and that he might not supply coherency to reality at all.

[103] Stifter's "schrecklich schöne Welt," writes Alfred Doppler, is characterized by an "unaufhebbaren Lebensspannung, . . . die der Mensch zu bestehen hat und die ihm gerade dort am heftigsten zusetzt, wo er sie zu verdrängen trachtet. Sichtbar wird diese Spannung in Stifters Auseinandersetzung mit der Natur und einer Naturgläubigkeit, die das Unterpfand metaphysischer Geborgenheit und gelassener Menschlichkeit sein sollte." Doppler, "Schrecklich Schöne Welt? Stifters Fragwürdige Analogie von Natur- Und Sittengesetz," 10.

novel its title. Such a "myth of mutual constructionism" appears already in the *Studien.*[104] The equivalence between *cultura agri* and *cultura animi* is a recurring motif in Stifter,[105] so that the human labor process is bi-directional: the realization of moral order in the external material world develops a moral condition within. In the preface to *Bunte Steine* the relation between internal and external cultivation is homologous: "So wie es in der äußeren Natur ist, so ist es auch in der inneren, in der des menschlichen Geschlechtes" ("As it is in external nature, so it is in the internal nature of the human race").[106] The "natural" human inclination towards a sort of moral code towards other humans has its source in the gentle law, just as the genuinely great in external nature is an expression of the gentle law. Stifter illustrates this gentle law as it manifests itself in moral human coexistence in good society – as when the strong come to the aid of the weak, in the love between spouses, in families, friends, and in a strong work ethic, all of which culminates in an orderly society and an orderly state. Because the *cultura agri* as *cultura animi* connection brings forward the ethical state of affairs that is the true structure of the universe, the work on the environment is itself world-preserving work.

It should be noted that Stifter's anti-revolutionary politics lie at the core of the ecosocial relations that the "world-preserving" connotes. In "Der Staat" ("The State"), a series of essays that appeared in April of 1848, Stifter argues that the state is an entity that arises out of human coexistence and derives its *raison d'être* from a mandate to guarantee the possibility of humans'

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[104] A myth of mutual constructionism is one "of physical environment (both natural and human-built) shaping in some measure the cultures that in some measure continually refashion it." Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 6.

[105] "Die Umgestaltung der Wirklichkeit durch den Menschen besteht für Stifter fast ausschließlich in der *Kultivierung* eines zunächst unwirtlichen, vielleicht sogar unfruchtbaren Landes durch Rodung, Weg- und Brückenbau, durch Garten- und Feldwirtschaft. . . . Indem er die Wirklichkeit umgestaltet, verändert er sich selbst. Cultura agri ist immer auch cultura animi." Irmscher, *Adalbert Stifter: Wirklichkeitserfahrung und gegenständliche Darstellung*, 111.

[106] Stifter, HKG, 2,2 : 12. Stifter, "Preface to Many-colored Stones," 3.

full ethical self-realization by ensuring a peaceful society.[107] And in 1849 he writes that the definition of freedom is, "daß Keiner den Menschen in der Pflicht der Sittlichkeit und Tugend stören darf. . . . Dadurch sind wir dann alle frei, dadurch sind wir dann alle gleich. Darum verlangt gerade die echte Freiheit die meiste Selbstbeherrschung . . ." ("that nobody may disturb man in the demands of morality and virtue. . . . Thus we are all free, thus we are all equal. For that reason real freedom demands the most self-control. . ."). [108] And the 1850 essay "Vom Rechte" ("On Right") makes the same point Stifter will make about human coexistence in the 1852 preface when he writes, "Recht ist ein solches Verhalten der Menschen, wodurch alle als Personen, d.h. nach höchster sittlicher Vollkommenheit strebende Wesen, neben einander bestehen können" ("Right is a type of human conduct through which all person, meaning all beings striving for highest moral development, can exist with each other"). [109] Revolution, in this view, actually limits freedom insofar as it impinges on individual moral self-realization. Following the homology of moral order in internal and external nature, environmental transformation also plays into an anti-revolutionary agenda. While *Brigitta* and *Abdias* both predate the revolutions, their respective ways of relating to their environments and their projects of cultivation in particular embody a mode of human existence that Stifter will call upon in his criticisms of the revolution.

The world-preserving work done through environmental transformation reflects the dual character of nature and the overall realist program in at least two ways. First, if the gentle law is never empirically there, then it is no longer clear whether the production of nature reveals an order that exists *a priori*, as the 1852 preface would seem to have it, or whether the production of

[107] Stifter, HKG, 8,2: 27-39. Emphasis in original.
[108] Stifter, HKG, 8,2 : 69-70. Emphasis in original.
[109] Stifter, HKG, 8,2 : 234. Emphasis in original.

nature is simply so much coercion passed off as ethical utopia. Risach's characterization of his garden as an invisible birdcage is an instance where both are true, as the bird behaves naturally in an environment produced to direct its activity. The second critical irony follows from the first: cultivation has the image of benign transformation of the external world at the end both of *Brigitta* and *Abdias*, but if it is so much coercion without an ethical framework, then the natural and the social break down into an antagonistic dualism where the latter has a triumphalist approach to the former. The ethical utopia of a space such as the Rose House becomes a refraction of the historical ecosocial conditions of high capitalism,[110] thereby reproducing the domination of nature to which they are supposed to be an alternative.

The stories I will consider in this chapter, *Brigitta* and *Abdias*, are programmatic texts that resonate the statements on realism Stifter makes in the 1852 preface while also providing opportunity to explore the tensions surrounding the production of nature that feed into the later work. Each opens with a set of theoretical reflections on the nature of reality and how it is that finite humans can grasp the general ideal that Stifter comes to call the gentle law. In both instances the work done on the environment is connected to the moral condition of the human and reveals the moral structure of the universe, so that the homology that binds the natural and the social in the 1852 preface already plays a programmatic function in the earlier novellas. While both novellas anticipate the image of a moral totality Stifter argues for in the 1852 preface

[110] In this light, Stifter's own image of mutual constructionism is subject to the same process as other variations of the dialectic under capitalism. “The complex dialectic in which, as Marx has it, we make ourselves by transforming the world, gets radically simplified into a rather simple one-track affair, even allowing for the ways in which esthetic judgments, romantic reactions, nature tourism, vegetarianism, animal rights movements, and monetized protections of nature through wilderness and habitat preservation surround the crass commercialism of our use of nature and so give it a veneer of accountability and respectability. The prevailing practices dictate profit-driven transformation of environmental conditions and an approach to nature which treats of it as a passive set of assets to be scientifically assessed, used and valued in commercial (money) terms.” Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, 131.

as well as the harmonious production of nature he imagines in *Nachsommer*, both also open up room for radical doubt on such questions as the integrity of the order made visible in the production of nature, the relation of God to the sensible world, and to the possibility of labor as mediating a harmonious relationship between the human and the environment after all.

Cultivating Nature and the Cheerful Abyss of Realism: Brigitta

The theoretical problem of what grounds perceivable reality and from whence the world derives order is central to *Brigitta. Brigitta* is recounted in the first person by an unnamed narrator who meets "the Major," revealed at the end to be Stephan Murai, while traveling in Italy. Later, after the narrator has returned to Germany, Murai repeatedly invites him for a visit at his estate in the Hungarian Puszta, the steppe region in what is now Hortobágy National Park in eastern Hungary, an invitation he accepts two years after their first encounter. In Hungary he first meets a woman who will turn out to be Brigitta, owner of the Maroshely estate. Both Brigitta and Murai are engaged in projects of cultivating their respective lands, creating beautiful and well-ordered nature out of the steppes, repeatedly referred to as a "Nichts," an "Öde," and a "Wüste" ("nothing," "barrenness," and a "desert). In the novella's third chapter we learn of how Brigitta was neglected and left to her own devices as a child because of her supposedly ugly appearance. Murai courts Brigitta, marries her in spite of her warnings, and together they have a son, Gustav. But the marriage collapses when Murai is seduced by Gabriele. Brigitta retreats to her estate, and Murai disappears. Emerging from isolation, Brigitta begins her work of cultivation, ultimately organizing with the other landowners in the area, all of whom are devoted to improving the region through productive transformation of the land. Fifteen years after their parting, Murai

returns in the guise of the Major, takes up residence at his own estate, and likewise employs the locals in his projects of ordering his land. At the climax of the novella, their son Gustav is threatened when wild wolves breach the estate walls, Murai rescues him, and this leads to the revelation of the Major's true identity and a restoration of the family unit. Because the novella's theoretical reflections hinge on beauty at the level of essence as opposed to the superficiality of appearance, making beauty visible while also making humans more sensible to genuine beauty has the larger stakes of making visible that higher instance that anchors sensible reality

The problem of the human ability to perceive the ideal revolves around the beautiful in *Brigitta*. The homology of external nature and human nature from the 1852 preface also informs the beauty problematic in the novella. At stake in beauty is the question of the conditions under which humans can see the moral ideal that undergirds perceivable reality when they tend to be taken in by superficial appearances. The narrator opens the novella with a series of reflections on the phenomenology of beauty, the judgment of beauty, and how these are indicative of a higher essence that supports the material world. This constellation, the narrator tells us, is one of life's mysterious "Dinge und Beziehungen"("things and relationships") that cannot be grasped rationally. [111] "Sie wirken dann meistens mit einem gewissen schönen und sanften Reize des Geheimnisvollen auf unsere Seele" ("these then affect our souls with the soft and beautiful charm of the mysterious").[112] We sometimes sense an inner beauty even in spite of an ugly appearance, whereas the features of an individual whom everyone judges to be beautiful appear "kalt und leer" ("cold and empty").[113] The moral reasons for this paradox resist empirical inquiry.

Daß zuletzt sittliche Gründe vorhanden sind, die das Herz heraus fühlt, ist kein

[111] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 411. *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path* (London : Chester Springs, PA: Angel Books ; Dufour Editions, 1990), 97.
[112] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 411. Stifter, Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path, 97.
[113] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 411. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 97.

> Zweifel, allein wir können sie nicht immer mit der Wage des Bewußtseins und der Rechnung hervor heben, und anschauen. Die Seelenkunde hat manches beleuchtet und erklärt, aber vieles ist ihr dunkel und in großer Entfernung geblieben. Wir glauben daher, daß es nicht zu viel ist, wenn wir sagen, es sei für uns noch ein heiterer, unermeßlicher Abgrund, in dem Gott und die Geister wandeln. Die Seele in Augenblicken der Entzückung überfliegt ihn oft, die Dichtkunst in kindlicher Unbewußtheit lüftet ihn zuweilen; aber die Wissenschaft mit ihrem Hammer und Richtscheite steht häufig erst an dem Rande, und mag in vielen Fällen noch gar nicht einmal Hand angelegt haben.[114]
>
> There is no doubt that ultimately there are moral reasons which the heart senses, though we cannot always weigh and examine them consciously and with calculation. Psychology has illuminated and explained many things, but there is much that it still finds dark and impenetrable. We believe therefore that it is not too much to say that there exists for us a cheerful and unfathomable abyss in which God and the spirits move. In moments of ecstasy the soul often soars over it, poetry in its childlike innocence sometimes reveals it, but science with its hammer and its [straightedge] mostly only stands at the edge and in many cases is unable even to approach it.[115]

Poetry here is brought together with science and *Seelenkunde* (translated above as "psychology" although in Stifter's time *Seelenkunde* is not an empirical science[116]) as three different modes of accessing the general from which beauty emanates. The cheerful abyss here serves the function of the guarantor of perceptible reality, beauty is simply an "Ausstrahlung" ("projection").[117] That they access it only to varying degrees leads to an epistemological hierarchy.[118] The exclusivity of proper aesthetic judgment is also introduced here and will be a major theme throughout the novella; in this instance no universal judgment of beauty can be inferred if the majority opinion

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[114] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 412-413.

[115] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 97, translation modified.

[116] For readings of the novella through the lens of nineteenth century pre-Freudian psychology see Gerda Wesenauer, "Literatur und Psychologie. Am Beispiel von Stifters *Brigitta*," *VASILO* 38, no. 1/2 (1989): 49–76, and Christian von Zimmermann, "‚Brigitta' - seelenkundlich gelesen: Zur Verwendung „kaliobiotischer" Lebensmaximen Feuchterslebens in Stifters Erzählung," in *Adalbert Stifter: Dichter und Maler, Denkmalpfleger und Schulmann. Neue Zugänge zu seinem Werk*, ed. Hartmut Laufhütte and Karl Möseneder (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996), 410–434.

[117] On this distinction see Eleonore Frey, "Dinge und Beziehungen: Zu Stifters Brigitta," *Orbis Litterarum: International Review of Literary Studies* 24 (1969): 55.

[118] Albert Meier, "Diskretes Erzählen: Über den Zusammenhang von Dichtung, Wissenschaft und Didaktik in Adalbert Stifters Erzählung »Brigitta«," *Aurora. Jahrbuch der Eichendorff-Gesellschaft* 44 (1984): 213.

declares beauty in physical features that to "us" are "cold and empty."[119] Beauty for the narrator is connected to an ethical imperative that likewise is accessible to the heart, but not to cognition,[120] and the question of beauty's proper recognition is a part of the overall didactic project of the *Studien*, which for Stifter was a matter of promoting "irgend ein sittlich Schönes"[121] ("a sort of moral beauty").

If knowledge of the general is forever incomplete, the narrator concludes, then what we are left with is a "cheerful abyss."[122] The phrase is emblematic of the irony that, intentionally or not, structures Stifter's realism, with "cheerful" and "abyss" connoting two separate possibilities for the structure of reality. The "cheerful" possibility is the one that the narrator favors, in which the abyss is unfathomable, but as the space of God and the spirits still does the work necessary to guarantee reality. But the term also leaves us with the possibility that the abyss is a void, one that is an even greater reality than God and the spirits because they simply dwell therein and serve merely to stabilize an obvious oxymoron.[123] The story of *Brigitta* in general and the images of environmental transformation in particular play out the reality that the introduction to the story

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[119] The exclusivity of an aesthetic upbringing is one of the points where Stifter diverges from Schiller, and is particularly apparent in Risach's comments on upbringing in *Der Nachsommer.* See Holub, "Adalbert Stifter's *Brigitta*, or the Lesson of Realism," 55.

[120] On the subject of the moral reasons of the heart and the inaccessibility thereof to reason see Walther Hahn, "Zu Stifters Konzept der Schönheit: „Brigitta"," *VASILO* 19, no. 3/4 (1970): 150.

[121] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 12.

[122] The attempt to stabilize reality in this way is a project that courses throughout Stifter's literary career, as Hans Dietrich Irmscher points out. "Die Legitimation für eine solche den gattungsgeschichtlichen Tendenzen des 19. Jahrhunderts zuwiderlaufende Absicht suchte Stifter in seiner dem Begriff des Naturgesetzes nachgebildetenVorstellung eines sittlichen Gesetzes, in dessen Allgemeingültigkeit er die Totalität des epischen Weltzustandes garantiert sah, nachdem ihm die vorgefundene Wirklichkeit jene nicht mehr bieten konnte." Irmscher, *Adalbert Stifter: Wirklichkeitserfahrung und gegenständliche Darstellung*, 23–24. The invocation of "God and the spirits" prefigures God as the guarantor of reality in the preface to *Bunte Steine.* On this point see Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction*, 31.

[123] See Horst Dieter Rauh's investigation of the abyss motif in Stifter. Rauh argues, "Stifters Ästhetik lebt insgeheim von jenem Abgrund, den sie in der Natur wie im Menschen erahnt" and, "Das Sinnbild das Abgrunds bezeichnet die Größe des Begehrens, den unabweisbaren Mangel an Sein. Sich dem Begehren zu stellen, bedeutet für Stifter im kulturellen System, das ihn prägte: den Abgrund zu verschleiern." Horst Dieter Rauh, "Der verschleierte Abgrund: Mensch und Natur bei Stifter," in *Begegnungen mit Adalbert Stifter: Aachener Akademietagung zum 200. Geburtstag* (Aachen: Einhard Verlag, 2006), 96.

argues for, and in so doing it carries the irony of a universe-structuring, reality-guaranteeing abyss into the physical environment. The production of nature in *Brigitta* is ostensibly about the cheerful while also bringing into view the void that negates the benign project of beautifying nature.

The oxymoron "cheerful abyss" unites within itself a contradiction between meaning and emptiness that the production of nature in the Puszta aims to eliminate. The image of the production of nature that the novella endorses casts wild nature and the more obviously social nature as a strict dichotomy, where the ordered nature that reflects a harmonious universal reality is strictly divided from its empty other at the boundary of the Uvar and Marosheley estates. Upon arriving at the Puszta the narrator encounters nature as overwhelming void, to which the gardens of the estates will later contrast.

> Anfangs war meine ganze Seele von der Größe des Bildes gefaßt: wie die endlose Luft um mich schmeichelte, wie die Steppe duftete, und ein Glanz der Einsamkeit überall und allüberall hinaus webte: - aber wie das morgen wieder so wurde, übermorgen wieder – immer gar nichts, als der feine Ring, in dem sich Himmel und Erde küßten, gewöhnte sich der Geist daran, das Auge begann zu erliegen, und von dem Nichts so übersättigt zu werden, als hätte es Massen von Stoff auf sich geladen – es kehrte in sich zurück, und wie die Sonnenstrahlen spielten, die Gräser glänzten, zogen verschiedene einsame Gedanken durch meine Seele, alte Erinnerungen kamen wimmelnd über die Haide, und darunter war auch das Bild des Mannes, zu dem ich eben auf der Wanderung war . . . [124]
>
> At first my whole soul was filled with the immensity of the scene – the way in which the boundless air caressed me, the fragrance of the steppes. [sic] and the way the shimmer of solitude spread everywhere and over everything. But when it was the same the next day and again the day after – nothing but the fine round in which heaven and earth met in a kiss – then the spirit became accustomed to it, the eye began to succumb and to become as sated by nothingness as though it had loaded itself with masses of material and to turn inwards and, while the rays of the sun played and the grass shimmered, various stray thoughts moved through my soul, old memories came thronging over the heath and among them was the image of the man I was now walking to meet . . . (98)

[124] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 413.

Uncultivated nature here undergoes an escalation in its sensory effects, where soon the emptiness overwhelms the subject. This effect of nature mirrors Stifter's first published story *Der Condor*, where Cornelia's trip in a hot air balloon takes her to a point in the sky where the cosmos no longer appear as a sentimental object of beauty, but cause her to collapse in a moment of sensory overload. In *Brigitta* the effect is both to turn the narrator within himself and to bend the narrative backwards into an account of the initial meeting between the first-person narrator and Murai. Nature as a void becomes an agent within the text for its effect on the narrator, and therefore for shaping the structure of his story by extension. The void of the uncultivated Puszta is one of the sites where the sublime tips into the uncanny in Stifter's fiction, because the encounter with its overwhelming power does not lead to a self-assertion of the subject, as is the case with the Kantian sublime, but instead confronts him with his own suddenly externalized memories.[125] And it is along these lines where the supposed harmony of humans working productively in their environment fractures into an antagonism, because the effect of uncultivated nature on the characters within the story elevates the stakes of cultivation to an assertion of the human subject and, by extension, the social over an objectified autonomous nature.[126]

The overwhelming experience of uncultivated nature that the narrator reports extends to

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[125] On the connection between the sublime and the uncanny in Stifter see Michael Minden, "Stifter and the Postmodern Sublime," in *History, Value, Text. Essays on Adalbert Stifter. Londoner Symposium 2003* (Linz: Adalbert-Stifter-Institut, 2006), 14–16. See also Eva Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen: Darstellungsproblematik und Sprachreflexion in der Prosa Adalbert Stifters* (München: Iudicium Verlag, 1992), 16–30.

[126] "Stifter thematisiert in seinen Schilderungen die Wahrnehmung als eine autonome Bewußtseinsart mit, seine Naturdarstellung impliziert stets die Subjektivität als die Perspektive, in der Natur als objektive Wirklichkeit erscheint. . . . [Seine Naturdarstellung wird] immer wieder zum Index: zum Index der Problematik menschlicher Weltaneignung überhaupt." Preisendanz, "Die Erzählfunktion der Naturdarstellung bei Stifter," 410. In his interpretation of *Brigitta* Jakob Lehmann similarly observers that the representation of nature is contingent upon human perception. "Nicht die Natur als solche wird dargestellt, sondern die Natur unter je verschiedenem Aspekt und wechselnder Perspektive menschlicher Wahrnehmung." Jakob Lehmann, "Adalbert Stifter: Brigitta," in *Deutsche Novellen von Goethe bis Walser: Interpretationen für den Deutschunterricht*, ed. Jakob Lehmann (Königstein/Ts.: Scriptor Verlag, 1980), 230.

all of human life in the Puszta. The narrator spends months wandering the Puszta before he gets to the estates at Uvar and Marosheley, and his image of the people is heavily inflected by environmental determinism. His time in the Puszta is a time of nomadism amongst unsettled rustics: shepherds, carters, bagpipers, and mounted horsemen. But as he approaches the estates the effect of the Puszta has undergone a qualitative erosion. The challenges he has of orienting himself in the space and of accurately judging distance he attributes to the "Gesichtstäuschungen dieses Landes"("the many optical illusions of that country").[127] The critical factor in the narrator's changed perception of place is the act of walking, which for Stifter is an "Index menschlicher Wirklichkeitserfahrung" ("Index of the human experience of reality").[128] It is as a foot traveler that the narrator arrives at knowledge of the Puszta, which in turn produces a changed perception of the place.[129] The changed perspective gained through walking arguably restores the moment of self-assertion to the telos of the sublime, but if so then it is severely eroded because the narrator does not so much arrive at a kind of self-assurance as much as he is simply too smart to be fooled by a nature that is now only capable of tricking the eye.

Environmental transformation in the novella fits into a universalist project of aesthetic upbringing, where cultivation makes visible the moral state of the ideal realm of the world-preserving, a task Stifter will assign to his realism in the 1852 preface. In spite of its emptiness, the narrator concludes before he arrives at the Uvar and Marosheley estates that the Puszta is not just a void, but contains within it a potential for good human coexistence with nature that can also be realized on a global historical scale.[130] He characterizes the Puszta as a land of "so viel

[127] Stifter, HKG 1,5 : 418. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 102.
[128] Preisendanz, "Die Erzählfunktion der Naturdarstellung bei Stifter," 418.
[129] "Erst das allmähliche Sicheinleben in die neue Umgebung ermöglicht also die Wahrnehmung des individuellen Wesens von Land und Menschen, weil die lange Irrwanderung den Erzähler von seinen unangemessenen Vorurteilen befreit und für die neue Erfahrung geöffnet hat." Meier, "Diskretes Erzählen," 215.
[130] Christian Begemann explains the problematic in semiotic terms: "Der üppige schwarze Grund etwa bezeichnet,

Wildheit, so viel Üppigkeit, trotz der uralten Geschichte so viel Anfang und Urspünglichkeit"("so much wildness, so much fertility and, in spite of its long history, so much that was primitive and primordial").[131] And he concludes his account of his wanderings prior to his arrival at the estates with the observation that,

> Jedes in dem Lande zeigt auf kommende Zeiten, alles Vergehende ist müde, alles Werdende feurig, darum sah ich recht gerne seine endlosen Dörfer, sah seine Weinhügel aufstreben, sah seine Sümpfe und Röhrichte, und weit draußen seine sanft blauen Berge ziehen.[132]
>
> Everything in this nation is prescient of future times, those things that are about to be superseded are lacking in vitality, those which are emerging are fiery, and for that reason I liked to look at its endless villages, at its vineyards, its marshes and reed-beds and far away its soft blue mountains.[133]

His appreciation of the region is predicated on the imagined future of that space, a future that he can imagine only after he begins to distinguish contours in the landscape such as villages and vineyards. The landscape is beautiful, but not for any of its visual qualities in the present. Instead what is beautiful is its potential to have its beauty realized in the future through production. The narrator's elevation of the project of transforming nature into world historical terms also feeds into a bourgeois notion of progress where the organization of labor under one such as Murai is both the condition for future prosperity and a justification for Murai's claim to power.[134]

These tensions are visible everywhere as the narrator tours the estates of Uvar and

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indem er sich als fruchtbar erweist, sein eigenes Telos, das der Mensch entbergen, dem er zur Realität verhelfen muß. Darin wird ein Absentes, ein Schlafendes, ja Totes – das Signifikat – allererst zum Leben und zur Präsenz gebracht. Damit die ursprüngliche Natur zu sich selbst kommen kann, d.h. zu dem, was sie von sich aus werden will und soll, muß etwas zu ihr hinzutreten, das sie vervollständigt. Dieses Supplement ist die menschliche Arbeit, die Kultur, ohne die die Natur nichts wäre als wild. . . . So gesehen veranschaulicht der Landschaftsraum in »Brigitta« mit seiner Spaltung in die Steppe einerseits und die üppig gedeihenden Ländereien um die Güter andererseits den idealen Gang der Naturgeschichte selbst." Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen: Stifter-Lektüren*, 273.

131 Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 417. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 101.

132 Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 417.

133 Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 101.

134 See Barbara Osterkamp, *Arbeit und Identität: Studien zur Erzählkunst des bürgerlichen Realismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1983), 119–120.

Maroshely. We see them, for instance, when Murai gives the narrator a tour of the estate on their first full day together.

> Der Park, durch den wir zuerst ritten, war eine freundliche Wildniß, sehr gut gehegt, rein gehalten, und von Wegen durchschnitten. Als wir hinaus auf die Felder kamen, wogten sie im dunkelsten Grün. Nur in England habe ich ein gleiches gesehen; aber dort, schien es mir, war es zarter und weichlicher, während dieses hier kräftiger und sonnedurchdrungener erschien.[135]
>
> The park through which we rode first of all was a [friendly] wilderness, very well tended and [kept pure] and dissected by paths. When we came out onto the fields they were undulating with the darkest green. I have only seen their equal in England; but there, it seemed to me, the green was softer and more tender, while here it was stronger and more sun-soaked.[136]

The narrator repeats elements of his previous description of the good cultivation of the land at Maroshely: well tended, the park is a space of green as opposed to the colorless wasteland. He is impressed in general by the fact that the cultivation of nature has brought contours to an otherwise montonous landscape, even as he praises the practice of monoculture at Marosheley, where "nicht ein Gräschen war zwischen [den Stangeln des Maises]" ("there was not a blade of grass between [the maize stalks]").[137] The description also carries over and accentuates the garden's internal contradictions. The narrator makes one of several contrasts between the cultivation of nature that he sees in the Puszta and what he has seen in western Europe, this time with the English gardens. The English garden hides its social character, but compared to the maintained forests in the estate on the Puszta, it approaches more the soft version of the beautiful, and so is actually closer to the softness of the vineyards on the Rhine. Uvar retains something of its "wild" character, but the novella does not conflate "wild character" with "authenticity." As we have seen, the stakes of the cultivation of nature within the novella's

[135] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 428.
[136] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 109, translation modified.
[137] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 420. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 103.

program mean that wild nature is anything but normative from the narrator's perspective. It also explains why Uvar seems to the narrator to be an "*Urwald*" ("primeval forest") when he first rides through it at night.[138] He is not wrong exactly in regarding the cultivated forest as "primeval," but he recognizes in the garden the paradox that it is the cultivated space that actually captures the essence of nature in the Puszta. The garden retains its affinities to the Puszta outside on account of its such qualities as being "stronger." Hence the seeming oxymoron of the "friendly wilderness" of the park.

"Friendly wilderness" is after "cheerful abyss" one of the most significant oxymorons of the story. *Wildnis* contains within it contradictory implications, both of which apply and are true for the narrator's experience of the garden. Grimm's Dictionary notes that "Wildnis" in contemporary usage denotes an "unbewohnte, unwegsame Gegend" ("uninhabited, impassable area"), or more commonly a "dichter Wald" ("thick forest"). But the actual meaning for the Grimms is more expansive, designating any "wild" object, "wildheit, etwas wildes" ("wildness, something wild") and historically connoted "wirr, seltsam, häszlich, unrein" ("tumultous, strange, ugly, impure"). It is also semantically related to *Wüste* (desert) and *Öde* (barrenness), the terms most commonly applied to the uncultivated Puszta.[139] At the same time, the Grimm's

[138] Stifter, HKG 1,5 : 422. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 106.

[139] See "Wildnis," Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jakob und Wilhelm Grimm, 1971. For an account of Stifter's use of the virgin nature topos in *Der Hochwald* see Mariane Wünsch, "Normenkonflikt zwischen „Natur" und „Kultur": Zur Interpretation von Stifters Erzählung 'Der Hochwald,'" in *Adalbert Stifter: Dichter und Maler, Denkmalpfleger und Schulmann. Neue Zugänge zu seinem Werk*, ed. Hartmut Laufhütte and Karl Möseneder (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996), 325–327. See also Helena Ragg-Kirkby, "'Sie geht in ihren großen eigenen Gesetzen fort, die uns in tiefen Fernen liegen, […] und wir können nur stehen und bewundern:' Adalbert Stifter and the Alienation of Man and Nature," *The German Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 352–353. Eric Downing points out that the supposed virginity of the woods in *Der Hochwald* is another instance of the "bad faith" at work in realism, because virginity is a necessarily human fiction presented as reality, even as it would exclude human reality. Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction*, 45. Leaving aside the numerous political and ideological problems inherent in thinking of "virgin nature," it is worth noting that Stifter does not see forest preservation as something desirable; "virgin" forests do not represent in his stories an ideal condition and forest clearing often appears as a historical necessity. For an overview of this problematic see Ulrich Dittmann, "Waldbilder in Adalbert Stifters Studien," in *Waldbilder: Beiträge zum interdisziplinären Kolloquium „Da ist Wald und Wald und Wald (Adalbert Stifter) Göttingen , 19.*

Dictionary note that the term's application to beautiful areas as early as Sebastian Franck in the sixteenth century. The purity of the park is not given, but is a product of the labor that goes into that space so that it can be kept "pure." The antinomies intrinsic to the word *Wildnis* and then to the "friendly wilderness" of this scene reflect the ironies within the descriptions of the environment.[140] Even before it is friendly, "*Wildniß*" in *Brigitta* is as double sided, both theoretically and practically, as the "cheerful abyss." The dual character of social nature it expresses is also reflected in the seemingly oxymoronic compound words that make up the novella's lexicon: "Gartenwald" ("garden-forest"), which along with other compound words like "Steppenhaus" ("House on the Steppes"), "Wolfshunde" ("wolf-hounds"), "Galgeneiche" ("gallows-oak") encapsulate in a single word both the social and natural character of the natural/environmental phenomenon each term designates.

For all of the scenes of labor and the production of social nature, the novella's theoretical investment is not in the image of the labor process itself as much as in the description of a beautiful (and beautified) environment. In the preface to *Bunte Steine* Stifter states that the gentle law is evident everywhere where humans exist for the benefit of each other, including "in der

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und 20. März 1999 (München: Iudicium Verlag, 2000), 40–43. Stifter's concern instead is with the preservation of nature as a cultural landscape, a stance which W.G. Sebald argues makes Stifter more than a mere reactionary. "Wenn, bestimmt von einer solchen naturphilosophischen Klage über die eingehende Vielfalt und Substanz des organischen Lebens, Stifters große Erzählungen die Form restaurativ-konservativer Denkschriften angenommen haben, so ist das weniger ein Beispiel politischer Reaktion als eines paracelsischen Engagements, das sich der bloßen Vermessung, Quantifizierung und Ausbeutung der Natur entgegensetzt. Mit der *Mappe meines Urgroßvaters* hat Stifter den fürs Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus allerdings schon zu spät kommenden Leitfaden einer Mensch und Natur ins gleiche Recht setzenden Praxis verfaßt." W. G. Sebald, *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks: zur österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1985), 27.

[140] On the subject of nature Brigitte Prutti writes, "Diese Doppelbesetzung der narrativen Diegese als fruchtbar, schön und vielversprechend und als abweisbar, opaker und (sinn-)leerer Raum ist charakteristisch für das antithetische Strukturprinzip von Stifters *Brigitta.*" Brigitte Prutti, "Künstliche Paradiese, strömende Seelen: Zur Semantik des Flüssigen in Stifters Brigitta," *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts* 15 (2008): 24. Walter Haußmann notes the similar structural irony in beauty when he points out, "Faszinierend ist an dieser heroischen Schönheit vor allem die Widersprüchlichkeit, das Geheimnisvolle. Die Pußta ist prachtvoll und öde, feierlich und eintönig, sprechend und schweigsam." Walter Haußmann, "Adalbert Stifter, Brigitta," *Der Deutschunterricht: Beiträge zu seiner Praxis und wissenschaftlicher Grundlegung* 3, no. 2 (1951): 37.

Thätigkeit, wodurch man für seinen Kreis für die Ferne für die Menschheit wirkt"("in the industriousness which sustains us, in the activity in which we work for our near and distant circle and for mankind").[141] The world-historical stakes assigned to human labor in the 1852 preface also inform the work done on nature in *Brigitta*, and it is through the organization of workers engaged in projects of environmental transformation that Murai transitions from the wandering character that the narrator met in Italy to embodying the moral ideal that Stifter will later call the "gentle law." The connection between the organization of labor, the transformation of the environment, and the ideal of the man settled on his estate is signaled by the title of the second chapter, where the tour of the estate takes place: "Steppenhaus" ("House on the Steppes"). During the tour, Murai leads the first-person narrator past guard houses that enforce the patriarchal order, workers draining a swamp to lay a road, people making of hay for the horses, and other hired hands harvesting camellias. Meanwhile we see the Major riding around his estates dressed in local clothing and "so zu der Umgebung stimmend, daß es schien, ich hätte ihn immer so gesehen" ("so in keeping with his entire surroundings that it seemed as though I had always seem [sic] him like this").[142] The ordering of the landscape and the raising of animals are contingent upon a division of labor that the Major has introduced, so that unlike the disorganized nomadism of the shepherds the narrator encountered during his wanderings, the labor of the people working at Uvar (and Maroshely) is organized with the purposiveness of a common enterprise. The people on the estate who still hold to a nomadic lifestyle, the gypsies, are also conscripted into the service of the Major, supplying musical entertainment for the workers at lunchtime.

[141] Stifter, HKG 2,2 : 13. Stifter, "Preface to Many-colored Stones," 4.
[142] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 427. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 108.

Murai is explicit that the activity cultivating the estate ultimately aims to bring the Puszta out of the cyclical time of empty nature that the narrator experienced upon first arriving in Hungary and into a teleological history that, according to him, now characterizes the experience of time everywhere on the planet. It is a project of realizing the potential that the narrator commented upon at the end of his initial wanderings through the steppe.

> Unsere Verfassung, unsere Geschichte ist sehr alt, aber noch vieles ist zu thun; wir sind in ihr, gleichsam wie eine Blume in einem Gedenkbuche aufgehoben worden. Dieses weite Land ist ein größeres Kleinod, als man denken mag, aber es muß noch immer mehr gefaßt werden. Die ganze Welt kömmt in ein Ringen sich nutzbar zu machen, und wir müssen mit. Welcher Blüthe und Schönheit ist vorerst noch der Körper dieses Landes fähig, und beide müssen hervorgezogen werden.[143]
>
> Our constitution, our history is very old, but there is still much to be done; we are preserved in it, like a flower pressed in an album This broad country is a greater jewel than one might think, but it still needs a setting. The whole world has entered on a struggle to make itself fruitful and we must go with it. The body of this country is capable of great flowering and beauty, and both must be cultivated.[144]

The scenes exploring the work being done on the estate resemble an idealized version of primitive accumulation: the estate is an enclosed space where the landowner is the ultimate power instance organizing and directing labor beneath for the material control of the environment. Murai's description of the project binds the historical dimension of cultivation to the overcoming of the problem of vision that we encounter both in the introduction to *Brigitta* and later in the 1852 preface. The valorization of the labor being done on the environment resembles the stakes assigned to the representation of work in Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*, insofar as the text figures it as an ideal image for humanity brought forward within the realist text. But in Murai's language we have again doubt over whether environmental transformation is

[143] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 436.
[144] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 115.

really about making visible a harmonious higher order reality or whether it is thinly-veiled human coercion. Murai implicitly denies his own Promethean role by wearing local garb, equating himself with the people by speaking as "we," and casting the process of environmental transformation as one of historical necessity and not of any particular circumstances to which he as a landowner has contributed. He implicitly denies that the estate is an eastward expansion of the European bourgeois order, as it was in *Soll und Haben*. The workers the narrator sees draining the swamp to lay the road are instead, in his words, "Bettler, Herumstreicher, selbst Gesindel, die er durch pünktliche Bezahlung gewonnen habe, daß sie ihm arbeiten" ("beggars, tramps, scaff and raff, whom he had got to work for him by he claims giving them prompt payment").[145] And elsewhere Murai is more explicit about his patriarchal role. He tells the narrator at one point,

> Vielerlei Volk ist in dem Lande, manches ist ein Kind, dem man vormachen muß, was es beginnen soll. Seit ich in der Mitte meiner Leute lebe, über die ich eigentlich mehr Rechte habe, als ihr euch denket, seit ich mit ihnen in ihrer Kleidung gehe, ihre Sitten theile, und mir ihre Achtung erworben habe, ist es mir eigentlich, als hätte ich dieses und jenes Glück errungen, das ich sonst immer in der einen oder der andern Entfernung gesucht habe.[146]
>
> There are all manner of people in our land, many of them still children who have to be shown what to do. Since I have been living in the midst of my people, over whom I have more rights than you think, since I have been going around with them in their costume, taking part in their way of life, and since I have won their respect, it seems to me as though I have gained many a happiness I had looked for in various distant spots in vain.[147]

Murai also claims that the workers are bound to him to such an extent that they would spill their blood under his leadership, a claim the narrator accepts as a sign of Murai's intrinsic moral fortitude.[148] The relation of dependency, what makes the workers "children," is their closeness to

[145] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 428. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 110.
[146] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 437.
[147] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 116.
[148] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 438; Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 118.

nature, out of which they will never emerge without Murai's patriarchal leadership.[149] But unlike in primitive accumulation, the transformation of the estate is not about setting in motion a process of exponential growth of capital.[150] Instead the text makes a utopian claim for the estates on the Puszta, as the employment of the locals is depicted not as expropriation but as an inclusion of the population in a relation to nature based on the soft Prometheanism the narrator idealizes. To that end, the narrator wants us to read the wages Murai pays not as a sign of the commodification of labor, but as evidence of the mutual regard of the kind Stifter speaks in the 1852 preface and in his post-1848 essays. Within the framework of the novella's program and Stifter's realism more generally, the cultivation of the estate is an alternative to the history of primitive accumulation. Russell Berman's argument about Risach in *Der Nachsommer*, who through dress and custom also seeks fraternity with his workers, could also be made about Murai: "Stifter proclaims the desideratum of a natural fraternity in which the artificiality of hierarchical etiquette has disappeared, but his own utopian schemes reproduce the signs of status in terms of the exigencies of the division of labor," leaving him in a "privileged position" where the labor process is an "aesthetic spectacle."[151]

The inner nature/outer nature homology of the 1852 preface is what ultimately elevates Murai to an ideal figure against any suspicion that his relation to the environment and the local

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[149] Barbara Osterkamp argues that the image of the workers in the novella casts them as nature, too, and Murai's position of power rests on a mutual acknowledgment of the necessity of Murai's program of upbringing. See Osterkamp, *Arbeit und Identität*, 136.

[150] "Das Kapitalverhältnis setzt die Scheidung zwischen den Arbeitern und dem Eigentum an den Verwirklichungsbedingungen der Arbeit voraus. Sobald die kapitalistische Produktion einmal auf eignen Füßen steht, erhält sie nicht nur jene Scheidung, sondern reproduziert sie auf stets wachsender Stufenleiter. Der Prozeß, der das Kapitalverhältnis schafft, kann also nichts andres sein als der Schediungsprozeß des Arbeiters vom Eigentum an seinen Arbeitsbedingungen, ein Prozeß, der einerseits die gesellschaftlichen Lebens- und Produktionsmittel in Kapital verwandelt, andrerseits die unmittelbaren Produzenten in Lohnarbeiter." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Das Kapital*, 39th ed., vol. 1 (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1962), 742.

[151] Russell Berman, *The Rise of the Modern German Novel: Crisis and Charisma* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 109.

people is a coercive one. Murai's work directing the cultivation of the estate ennobles the figure himself in the eyes of the narrator, so that he perceives his host as a revival of a classical pastoral ideal for fulfilling the task of making nature more natural.[152]

> Die Einsamkeit und Kraft dieser Beschäftigungen erinnerte mich häufig an die alten starken Römer, die den Landbau auch so sehr geliebt hatten, und die wenigstens in ihrer früheren Zeit auch gerne einsam und kräftig waren.
>
> „Wie schön und ursprünglich," dacht ich, „ist die Bestimmung des Landmannes, wenn er sie versteht und veredelt. In ihrer Einfalt und Mannigfaltigkeit, in dem ersten Zusammenleben mit der Natur, die leidenschaftlos ist, gränzt sie zunächst an die Sage von dem Paradiese."
>
> The solitude and the strength of these occupations reminded me frequently of the strong ancient Romans who had loved agriculture so much and who, at least in the earlier period, had also liked to be solitary and strong.
>
> 'How beautiful and how primeval,' I thought, 'is the vocation of the farmer, if he understands and ennobles it. In its simplicity and variety, in this first coexistence with nature, which is without passion, it borders above all on the myth of paradise.'[153]

The invocation of the pastoral in this instance, especially as it relates to the state of the environment in the world of the novella, carries with it the political ambivalence of the genre, particularly in ecological terms. Lawrence Buell writes of "Pastoral Ideology," "Historically, pastoral has sometimes activated green consciousness, sometimes euphemized land appropriation. It may direct us toward the realm of physical nature, or it may abstract us from it."[154] From the perspective of the narrator and the novella's didactic-aesthetic program, Murai's work on nature does point to what Buell sees as the positive potential of pastoralism, as "opening up the possibility of a more densely imaged, environmentally responsive art."[155] But this more

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[152] "Die Aufgabe des Menschen besteht also darin, *in die Natur eingreifend ihr zu sich selbst zu verhelfen.*" Irmscher, *Adalbert Stifter: Wirklichkeitserfahrung und gegenständliche Darstellung*, 115, emphasis in original. On the relation between *Brigitta* and the Virgilian pastoral model see Haußmann, "Adalbert Stifter, Brigitta," 38–41.

[153] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 437.

[154] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 31. See also Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 37–65.

[155] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 32.

positive reading of the novella's pastoralism depends upon our acceptance of the estate as a model of a utopian alternative history. *Brigitta* does imagine the Puszta as a kind of alternative history to the more obviously coercive environmental transformations taking place in Stifter's time; Konrad Feilchenfeldt, for instance, reads in *Brigitta* a positive counterexample to the mismanagement of the Danube in and around Vienna in the 1840s.[156] But Murai's "first coexistence with nature" falls on both sides of pastoral ideology, because the pastoral ideal Murai strives for also supplies an ethical reason for the transformation of the landscape and the annihilation of the local wolf population, actions that we can read either as moral transformations of nature or as the domination of nature.

The narrator's description of Murai here blends Christian notions of paradise with images drawn from Roman bucolic,[157] both in that "it borders on the myth of paradise" and insofar as Murai lives "in this first coexistence with nature." The credibility of the comparison depends on the weight we give to the phrase "borders on." Uvar (and Maroshely) do border on paradise to the extent that Murai appears to the narrator as one with the world around him,[158] although the story of Ditha in *Abdias* will make the illusory character of this seeming unity clear. The comparison also fits with the harmonious way in which the novella imagines the relation to nature at Uvar. But it opens up another subtle ironic fissure in the novella's program: we only arrive at a prelapsarian state through a postlapsarian reality against which the reality vouched for

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[156] Konrad Feilchenfeldt, "Brigitta und andere Chiffren des Lebens bei Adalbert Stifter," in *Stifter-Studien: ein Festgeschenk für Wolfgang Frühwald zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Hettche (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 47–50.

[157] For accounts of the usage of both classical and biblical motifs see Haußmann, "Adalbert Stifter, Brigitta," 38–41, Benno von Wiese, "Adalbert Stifter: Brigitta," in *Die deutsche Novelle von Goethe bis Kafka: Interpretationen*, vol. 2 (Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1956), 201, and Traude Nischik, "Umhegter Garten und Blankes Siegel: Emblematische Bildlichkeit in Adalbert Stifters Erzählungen »Brigitta« und »Das alte Siegel« (1844)," *Aurora. Jahrbuch der Eichendorff-Gesellschaft* 38 (1978): 89–90.

[158] Swales and Swales, *Adalbert Stifter: A Critical Study*, 99.

by God and the spirits must be maintained. And while in Genesis "the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it,"[159] the work of dressing and keeping paradise is incommensurable with the labor of Adam after the Fall, since the work of cultivation done after the Fall is a matter of gaining nourishment out of a cursed ground that resists cultivation.[160] The division of labor and the creation of a fruitful space from barrenness are all aspects of a postlapsarian reality, a reality that requires a stabilizing framework.[161] In making the statement about paradise, the narrator casts the project of environmental transformation in terms of what Carolyn Merchant has called a "recovery narrative," a story of returning humans to the garden of Eden by way of science and capitalism.[162] Merchant argues that the recovery narrative legitimates environmental transformation and settlement in the context of American history,[163] and it is deployed to similar effect in *Brigitta*.

The ideal of passionless equanimity Murai achieves through the cultivation of the estate turns out to be a kind of recovery narrative at the end of the novella after it is revealed that it was he who was married to Brigitta and left her for the superficial beauty of Gabriele. When the narrator first met him Murai's interior accorded not with any peaceful cultivated nature but with the simmering Vesuvian landscape. At the time Murai appeared as a romantic figure of poetic

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159 *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Genesis 2:15.

160 ". . . cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground. . ." Ibid., Genesis 3:17–19.

161 Christian Begemann points out that the text "operiert also mit einer Doppelstrategie: So wenig seine Formulierungen verbergen, daß der Landmann ein zweites, ja ein künstliches Paradies schafft, so deutlich ist das Bestreben, diesen Sachverhalt zu annullieren: das kulturell gestiftete Paradies, die zweite Natur *soll* als die erste Natur, als Ursprung gelten. In diesem Zusammenhang ist es sehr bezeichnend, daß der Erzähler die »Bestimmung des Landmannes« euphemistisch als »erstes *Zusammenleben* mit der Natur« umschreibt, wird darin doch das geradezu konstitutive Moment der Arbeit an der Natur verschweigen." See Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen: Stifter-Lektüren*, 275.

162 Carolyn Merchant, "Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 133.

163 Ibid., 137.

excess, as the narrator comments, "daß diese Seele das Glühendste und Dichterischste sei, was mir bis dahin vorgekommen ist" ("that his was the most [glowing] and poetic soul I had ever encountered").[164] Murai embodies in the "Steppenhaus" chapter freedom as demanding self-control that Stifter argued in his essays on freedom.[165] If cultivation moves along the internal nature/external nature homology, then so too does the moment of coercion. A process of two-way domination thus creeps into the ideal image of cultivation, so that Murai turns from a pastoral figure who harkens back to an ideal moment in antiquity, and becomes instead an example of how the domination of outer nature and the domination of inner nature go hand in hand. The cultivation of the estate then seems to have more in common with the industrial society to which it is supposed to be an alternative. In his essay "The Revolt of Nature," Max Horkheimer argues that the domination of nature becomes internalized, such that "the human being, in the process of his emancipation, shares the fate of the rest of his world."[166] In Stifter's case, if we lose the guarantor of a universal moral order, if the "cheerful abyss" turns out to be nothing more than a void, than the production of nature turns out to be mere repression of both internal and external natures.[167]

The "Steppenhaus" chapter presents the more harmonious story of the development of inner nature and outer nature in Murai. The following chapter, "Steppenvergangenheit" ("The Steppes in the Past") narrates the past failure of the project of internal cultivation in Murai and

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[164] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 415. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 100, translation modified. The journal version of *Brigitta* makes the paradox of the Major's age more explicit. The narrator remarks that "eine solche Gewalt der Ursprünglichkeit brach oft aus diesem dunklen Gemüthe, nicht anders, als werde er sein Leben erst beginnen, und in den bereits alternden Zügen schimmerte es wie schwärmerisch schönes Hoffen einer einsamen Jünglingsseele." Stifter, HKG, 1,2 : 216.

[165] Stifter, HKG, 8,2 : 70.

[166] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 93.

[167] "Since the subjugation of nature, in and outside of man, goes on without a meaningful motive, nature is not really transcended or reconciled but merely repressed." Ibid., 94.

especially in Brigitta. The story of Brigitta's early childhood is a story of reciprocal failed cultivation of internal nature. Because the mother failed to recognize beauty in its particular context, she did not do the work of initiating Brigitta in the social world, devoting her attentions instead to Brigitta's two sisters. Brigitta thus develops along a line of first nature, more in accordance with the wild Puszta than the cultivated ideal.

> Da die Glieder stark geworden waren, und ihre Wohnung nicht mehr in dem engen Bettchen bestand, saß sie in einem Winkel, spielte mit Steinchen, und sagte Laute, die sie von niemanden gehört hatte. Als sie in ihren Spielen vorrückte und behender ward, verdrehte sie oft die großen wilden Augen, wie Knaben thun, die innerlich bereits dunkle Thaten spielen. Auf die Schwestern schlug sie, wenn sie sich in ihre Spiele einmischen wollten – und wenn jetzt die Mutter in einer Anwandlung verspäteter Liebe und Barmherzigkeit das kleine Wesen in die Arme schloß, und mit Thränen benetzte, so zeigte dasselbe keineswegs Freude, sondern weinte, und wand sich aus den umfassenden Händen. Die Mutter aber wurde dadurch noch mehr zugleich liebend und erbittert, weil sie nicht wußte, daß die kleinen Würzlein, als sie einst den warmen Boden der Mutterliebe suchten und nicht fanden, in den Fels des eigenen Herzens schlagen mußten, und da trotzten.
>
> So ward die Wüste immer größer.[168]

> When her limbs had grown strong and she no longer lived in the narrow cradle, she sat in a corner, played with pebbles and made sounds that she had heard from no one. When she had advanced in her games and had become more agile she often rolled her great wild eyes, as boys do when they are inwardly playing at dark deeds. She hit her sisters when they wanted to interfere in her games – and when her mother folded the little creature in her arms and bedewed her with her tears in a rush of belated love and kindness, the child showed not the least joy but wept and pulled free of the enfolding hands. This made the mother simultaneously more loving and more embittered, because she did not know that the little roots that had once looked for the warm soil of a mother's love and had not found it had no choice but to take root in the rock of the child's own heart and there grow obstinate.
>
> So the desert grew bigger and bigger.[169]

Brigitta's early childhood follows the Kaspar Hauser pattern of a child whose relative isolation means that she develops outside of societal norms.[170] The mother's belated attempt to socialize

[168] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 447.
[169] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 122–123.
[170] For a consideration of the influence of the Kaspar Hauser story, see Eva Geulen, "Adalbert Stifters Kinder-Kunst. Drei Fallstudien.," *Deutsche Viertelsjahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 67

Brigitta seemed unlikely to succeed because it is offered as a mere corrective; in the parlance of the novella the mother lacks the heart of one who can appreciate more than the mere surface, and so any effort at upbringing is already stymied by misrecognition.[171] By the time the narrator first encounters her, Brigitta has achieved only a partial socialization. The account given here traffics in metaphors of external nature ("desert," "rocks," "little roots," etc.), so that the story of Brigitta's early life solidifies the *cultura agri* as *cultura animi* homology. In so doing the story also reproduces the topos of correlating woman with the landscape.[172] Gabriele, who seduces Murai, is also brought up without much intervention from her parents, although in her case it comes from her father's understanding of freedom, one that Stifter explicitly rejects both in the novella and in his post-1848 essays. Gabriele's father lets her grow up wild, "weil er meinte, daß sie sich nur so am naturgemäßesten entfalte, und nicht zu einer Puppe gerathe, wie er sie nicht

(1993): 648–68. Geulen argues that Stifter's "wild children" open up a "Freiraum, in dem jene ästhetischen und literarischen Probleme sichtbar werden, mit denen diese Text unsichtbar ringen," and that "die angebliche Schweigepoetik nicht Grund, sondern Effekt eines Darstellungsverfahrens ist, das nicht der Furcht vor, sondern der rückhaltlosen Hingabe an Wort und Sprache entspringt." Ibid., 652, 653.

[171] This narrative of Brigitta's early childhood was kept with only a few modifications from the 1841 to the 1847 versions of the story, the biggest difference being that the 1841 version suggests a higher degree of conscious agency on the mother's part in overlooking Brigitta.

[172] Sherry Ortner explores the commonplace of equating women to nature in her essay "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" Ortner argues that the universal devaluaing of woman has to do with the identification of woman with that which culture devalues, specifically nature. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?," in *Women, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 72. Carol MacCormack likewise argues that the identification of female with nature gives prestige to the domination of both, but she criticizes Ortner's claim that the identification of female to nature and the subjugation it allows for is transcultural. Carol MacCormack, "Nature, Culture and Gender: A Critique," in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, ed. Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1-24, here 6–11. Carolyn Merchant sees the encoding of nature as female as rooted in the myth of Eve, and therefore critical to the grand narrative of recovering Eden that justifies both environmental transformation and colonial expansion. "As fallen Eve, nature is disorderly and chaotic; a wilderness, wasteland, or desert requiring improvement; dark and witchlike, the victim and mouthpiece of Satan as serpent. As mother Eve, nature is an improved garden, a nurturing earth bearing fruit, a ripened ovary, maturity." Merchant, "Reinventing Eden: Western Culture as a Recovery Narrative," 137. At the same time the analogy of male to (destructive, technocratic) culture has been a point of connection between "nature endorsing" feminist theory and ecological politics. For an overview of these debates see Kate Soper, *What is Nature?,* 121-125. As the equation of female to nature plays out in *Brigitta,* Brigitte Prutti observes, "Die sexualisierte Natur in dieser Beschreibung verfügt über männliche wie weibliche Prädikate, was der Besitzerin dieses Anwesens entspricht, deren geschlechtliche Ambiguität auf den Landschaftsraum übertragen scheint." See Prutti, "Künstliche Paradiese, strömende Seelen," 24.

leiden konnte" ("because he thought that only in this way could she develop in the most natural manner, without turning into the sort of doll which he could not stand").[173] And Murai, as we have already seen, also requires upbringing, but to the extent that he is compared to nature, it is to the extent that the passions within him mirror nature's forces, as when he is standing at the edge of a steaming volcanic vent on Vesuvius.[174]

There is an important aside to be made in regards to Brigitta's supposed ugliness. Ulrich Dittmann points out that the reader's knowledge of Brigitta's supposed ugliness always comes second hand, from the picture the narrator regards, from the unreliable Gömör, etc. and are not to be taken at face value.[175] And Benno von Wiese notes that, "es geht hier nicht um eine Häßlichkeit, die absonderlicherweise für schön gehalten, sondern es geht um eine Schönheit, die absonderlicherweise von den meisten Menschen für häßlich gehalten wird" ("it is not about an ugliness strangely regarded as beauty, rather it is about a beauty strangely regarded as ugliness").[176] In fact this is the point of the novella's reflections on beauty; judging Brigitta to be ugly reveals that the person making the judgment lacks the proper eye for genuine beauty. It does not implicate Brigitta, but the person making the judgment.[177]

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[173] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 458. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 130-131.

[174] On the indirect representation of the characters' interiority through the landscapes in *Brigitta* Irmscher writes, "Kein Zweifel, daß etwa die „furchtbar zerworfene dunkle Öde" der Vesuvlandschaft ebenso ein Bild vom Charakter des Majors entwirft, wie das Verhältnis von unkultivierter Steppe und fruchtbare Oase auf die Möglichkeiten hindeutet, die in Brigittas Wesen beschlossen liegen und erst allmählich, eben in der Umgestaltung des Chaos, ihr und anderen erkennbar, in gegenständlicher Klarheit hervortreten." Irmscher, *Adalbert Stifter: Wirklichkeitserfahrung und gegenständliche Darstellung*, 145.

[175] Ulrich Dittmann, "Brigitta und kein Ende. Kommentierte Randbemerkungen," *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts* 3 (1996): 28.

[176] von Wiese, "Adalbert Stifter: Brigitta," 207. Alternatively Patricia Howe argues that it is not that Brigitta is not ugly, but that her ugliness is suppressed in favor of the novella's program. Howe argues that the narrator understands that judging Brigitta to be ugly would make him one who only has a superficial sense of beauty. "These insights diminish his narrative's commitment to Brigitta's ugliness. Hence he retards and suppresses it: by confronting it indirectly as mediated through aesthetic distance; by emphasising the beauty of the people and landscape that surround her; and by beginning to redeem her from it before it has been firmly established." Patricia Howe, "Faces and Fortunes: Ugly Heroines in Stifter's *Brigitta*, Fontane's *Schach von Wuthenow* and Saar's *Sappho*," *German Life and Letters* 44, no. 5 (October 1991): 428.

[177] Von Zimmermann sees a "Doppelstruktur" in the difference between the *impression* that Brigitta is ugly and the

The story of Brigitta's childhood raises the problem of what it means to be human in Stifter's narrative universe. While in his essays Stifter is inconsistent about his terms "human" and "person," the realization of full humanity for him is tied to morality or at least moral striving. In his essay "Vom Rechte," for instance, Stifter distinguishes between biological humans (*Mensch*) and persons (*Personen*), arguing that persons are distinguished by a free will through which they work towards moral self-completion.[178] "Aber ist der Mensch zu jeder zeit eine Person, und woran erkennt man die Persönlichkeit? Nicht zu jeder Zeit ist der Mensch eine Person; denn nicht immer hat er seinen freien Willen"("But is a human always a person, and how does one recognize personhood? The human is not always a person, for he does not always have free will").[179] Stifter's examples of humans who are not persons are children, who up until a certain age have only a "thierisches Begehren" ("animal desire"), as well as the insane, the feverish, and those overcome by affect.[180] Stifter argues that all humans deserve moral consideration here in a way that other "things" (including non-human animals) do not, but the grounds for that moral consideration are future oriented: we may not treat biological humans who are not persons as we please because of their potential to become human.[181] But placing the difference between humans and other animals within the realm of potential, as opposed to some faculty perceived to be unique to *homo sapiens,* leaves anyone who has not yet realized this potential in an uncertain space: one may be able to achieve personhood later, but until one reaches that state one has some degree of affinity with non-human animals. The distinction is further blurred considering the extent to which animals resemble humans for Stifter. In an essay

fact that the text does not give us any unmediated evidence of her ugliness, a double structure that we miss if we see her as simply ugly. See Christian von Zimmermann, "*Brigitta – seelenkundlich gelesen,*" 418-419.

178 Stifter, HKG, 251, emphasis in original.

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid.

fragment from 1845 “Zur Psichologie der Tiere” (“On the Psychology of Animals”), Stifter compares animals to children, with the the main difference being that animals have a limited potential for upbringing. He imagines making fruitful discoveries “wenn wir das eine oder das andere Tier so studierten wie die Kinder, oder wenn wir gar schon sehr viele Grammatiken der Tiersprache und Dialekte fertig hätten” (“ if we studied this or that animal as we study children, or even if we had ready numerous grammars of animal language and dialects”).[182] As Alois Hofman points out, Stifter attributes to animals faculties of perception and, to an extent, cognition that are also attributed to humans, the difference being that while animals lack human judgment, they are more than the sum of their instincts and reflexes, can perceive sensibly, and they may have “soul,” although animals lack “spirit.”[183]

Like Murai, the real change for Brigitta in terms of her relationship to the world-preserving comes after she re-emerges from the seclusion she enters after the separation from her husband and begins actively cultivating her own estate. The other landowners in the area follow her example, organize together, and build a political order that departs from the chaos of the uncultivated Puszta. The members of the agricultural confederation engage in similar projects of producing nature so that “hie und da auf der öden blinden Haide schlug sich ein menschlich freies Walten, wie ein schönes Auge auf”(“here and there on the barren blind heath a human free activity began, like the opening of a beautiful eye”).[184] If, as Franz Mautner argues, the beautiful eye symbol refers both to the beauty of the soul and productive activity,[185] then this is the moment in which the two meanings harmoniously converge. The project of making visible the

[182] Ibid., 8,2 : 14.
[183] Alois Hofman, “Die Tierseele bei Adalbert Stifter,” *VASILO* 13, no. 1/2 (1964): 9.
[184] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 461. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 133.
[185] Franz Mautner, “Randbemerkungen zu »Brigitta«,” in *Adalbert Stifter: Studien und Interpretationen. Gedenkschrift zum 100. Todestage* (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1968), 98.

intrinsic beauty of the Puszta happens only on a large scale because of the creation of a political order that makes possible individual and collective self-actualization. Rosemarie Hunter-Lougheed points out that this instance of the eye motif joins the cultural landscape to Brigitta's eyes,[186] thus the eyes mark another iteration of the homology between the external world and the interior self.[187]

In cultivating the estate Brigitta creates the conditions for the realization of human political freedom (as Stifter understands it) in the Puszta and thereby too for Murai's rehabilitation. Fifteen years after his departure he returns unrecognized under the guise of the Major, and acquires the values of productive work on the estate from Brigitta. "Von diesem Weibe lernte er, wie er mir selber sagte, Thätigkeit und Wirken – und zu diesem Weibe faßte er jene tiefe und verspätete Neigung, von der wir oben erzählt haben" ("From this woman, as he told me himself, he learned activity and effectiveness – and he formed for this woman that deep and belated affection of which we have spoken above").[188] The work on nature causes others to work on nature, and in so doing instills in them the values of productive activity that continue to motivate work done on nature. Insofar as this also leads to Murai's rehabilitation, the cultivation of the Puszta creates the conditions for the harmonious restoration of the family at the novella's climax. With Murai again engaged in the improvement of the Puszta, the possibility of realizing the area's latent potential for beauty, and from there for poesy, becomes tangible, as becomes clear as Brigitta, the Major, and the narrator ride around the Maroshely estate in the final chapter.

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[186] Rosemarie Hunter-Lougheed, "Adalbert Stifter: *Brigitta* (1844/47)," in *Romane und Erzählungen zwischen Romantik und Realismus: Neue Interpretationen*, ed. Paul M. Lützeler (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1983), 366.

[187] For more on the eye motif in *Brigitta* and elsewhere in Stifter see Erika Tunner, "Zum Sehen Geboren, zum Schauen Bestellt': Reflexionen zur Augensymbolik in Stifters 'Studien,'" *Études Germaniques* 40, no. 3 (September 1985): 335–348 and Richard Rogan, "Stifter's 'Brigitta': The Eye to the Soul," *German Studies Review* 13, no. 2 (May 1990): 243–251.

[188] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 461. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 133.

> Unter Gesprächen der verschiedensten Art, von der Zukunft des Landes, von Hebung und Verbesserung des gemeinen Mannes, von Bearbeitung und Benützung des Bodens, von Ordnung und Einschränkung des Donaustromes, von ausgezeichneten Persönlichkeiten der Vaterlandsfreunde, kamen wir durch den größten Theil des Parkes. . . [189]
>
> During conversation of the most varied kind – on the future of the country, on the raising and improvement of the lot of the ordinary man, on the preparation and exploitation of the soil, on the [ordering and narrowing of the flow] of the Danube, on [exemplary] Personalities among [friends of the fatherland] – we went through the greatest part of the park . . . [190]

The narrator's gloss of the conversation during the tour of Maroshely reiterates the basic coordinates of the relation between *cultura agri* and *cultura animi*. But it also connects these local stakes to the more continental scale of the stakes of the human transformation of the environment by invoking the historical regulation of the Danube.[191] The conversation then moves on the the exemplary people who are friends the fatherland. The line traced moves from the "improvement" of nature to the state, linking the "conquest of nature" to greater political processes of state formation.[192]

Where the tour of Uvar was an image of ideal, beautiful nature in a process of becoming, the tour of Maroshely exemplifies the beautiful end result, but also the antinomies of social nature that human labor is unable to permanently purge.

> Sie führte uns in den Park, der vor zehn Jahren ein wüster Eichenwald gewesen war; jetzt gingen Wege durch, flossen eingehegte Quellen, und wandelten Rehe. Sie hatte durch unsägliche Ausdauer um den ungeheuren Umfang desselben eine hohe Mauer gegen die Wölfe aufführen lassen. Das Geld hiezu zog sie langsam

[189] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 464.

[190] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 135, translation modified.

[191] For Konrad Feilchenfeldt, the allusion to the regulation of the Danube opens the text up to be read as a cipher for the Brigittenau in Vienna, an area that had been a favorite destination for Viennese day-trippers looking to recreate in nature, but that was built up in the course of the city's expansion. For Feilchenfeldt *Brigitta* presents the work done on the Puszta as a positive counterexample to the mismanagement of the Danube in the 1840s. See Feilchenfeldt, "Brigitta und andere Chiffren des Lebens bei Adalbert Stifter," 50.

[192] That the transformation fo the environment was both made possible by and allowed for German state formation is the argument that David Blackbourn advances in *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*, see especially 6-12.

> aus ihrem Viehstande, und aus den Maisfeldern, deren Pflege sie sehr empor gebracht hatte. Als die Einhegung fertig war, ging man in einem geschlossenen Jagen Schritt für Schritt durch jede Stelle des Parkes, um zu sehen, ob man nicht etwa einen Wolf zu künftiger Brut mit eingemauert habe. Aber es war keiner zugegen. Dann erst wurden Rehe in die Einhegung gesetzt, und für Anderes Vorkehrungen gemacht. Die Rehe, schien es, wußten das alles und dankten ihr dafür; denn, wenn wir manches bei unserem Gange sahen, war es nicht scheu und blickte mit den dunkeln, glänzenden Augen gegen uns herüber.[193]
>
> She led us into the park which ten years earlier had been a wild oak wood; now there were paths through it, streams flowed between well-built banks and deer wandered about. By means of immense persistence she had managed to have a wall built round it against the wolves. She drew the money for this from her cattle herds and the maize-fields, whose cultivation she had very much improved. When the enclosure was finished, the park was hunted over piece by piece to see if a wolf, which could breed in future, had not been enclosed too. But there was none. Only then were deer introduced into the enclosure and other arrangements made. The deer, it seemed, knew all this and were grateful; for, when we saw some of them on our walk, they were not shy but looked at us with dark shining eyes.[194]

If at Uvar we mostly saw images of labor and production, the description of Maroshely is of the product. But it is a description that contains the history of the socialization of nature – the transition from forest to garden, Brigitta's capitalization of the corn field and reinvestment of the value to construct a wall and enclose the park, and the process of extermination of the wolves. The enclosed streams and the paths through the forest make yet another appearance as signs of cultivation. The deer left over after the wolves are exterminated take on anthropomorphic qualities in the view of the narrator, especially in quality of their eyes, which are dark, like Brigitta's. Animals here on the one hand are screens for the sorts of human temperaments that the novella is interested in, with wolves ostensibly representing untamed wildness and the deer serene passionlessness. And in suggesting that the deer understand and are grateful for the efforts of the humans to create for them a space without their natural predators, the narrator extends the

[193] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 463-464.
[194] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 134-135.

possibility that animals are at a cognitive level that would allow for gratitude, a possibility Stifter leaves open in the essay "Zur Psichologie der Tiere."

The cultivation of nature, and the didactic and aesthetic stakes that the novella assigns to it, experience a key moment of rupture in the climax of the novella, when wolves break into the estate and threaten the life of Brigitta and Murai's son Gustav. The appearance of the wolves is the moment of reassertion both of a repressed external nature and of Murai's own animalistic inner nature. In terms of external nature, the wolf attack is a sign that even as Murai and Brigitta have worked to transform their estates into spaces radically different from the rest of the Puszta, a kind of "off-world," their estates are still subject to global systems and larger relations of cause and effect. Murai observes, "Seit fünf Jahren . . . hat sich kein Wolf so nahe zu uns gewagt, und es war sonst ganz sicher hier. Es muß einen harten Winter geben, und er muß in den nördlichen Ländern schon begonnen haben, daß sie sich bereits so weit herab drücken" ("For five years . . . no wolf has dared to come so close to us and it has been quite safe here. It must be a hard winter, and it must have begun already further north, since they are already pressing so far south").[195] Murai's deduction of climatic variation from the presence of the wolves raises again the question of the world-preserving: their presence is an expression of greater cosmic forces, but their presence also raises the possibility of a reality determined only by capricious natural forces, as opposed to the stabilizing realm of God and the spirits. If the wolves are a threat, a threat rooted in larger natural processes, in other words, then the stability of the ethical qualities that social nature is supposed to reveal no longer appears as evidence of a moral noumenal instance that guarantees reality, but is contingent instead on Murai and Brigitta as governors of their respective estates. The wolf presence, likewise, momentarily destabilizes the image of Murai as

[195] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 470. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 139.

the embodiment of a pastoral ideal. He moves in against the wolves "mit der Wuth seiner vor Angst und Wildheit leuchtenden Augen," and the narrator reports that he was "fast entsetzlich anzuschauen, ohne Rücksicht auf sich, fast selber wie ein Raubthier" ("with the anger in his eyes, blazing with fear and wildness", "almost terrible to behold: with no thought for himself, almost like a beast of prey").[196] After raising the question the novella would seem to shut out the speculation that nature really is a dumb void after all. It is the attack that reunites Brigitta and Murai and allows for the family to be restored.

Ulrich Dittmann points to this fact in arguing that the wolves, too, are a necessary part of the larger world-preserving reality that constitutes Stifter's realism, and their justification, both in the narrative and in the poetic structure of reality the novella puts forward, lies precisely in the fact that they are the condition for the harmonious ending. Dittmann writes that critics who have seen the wolves strictly as an anti-civilizational force within the novel misapprehend their constitutive function for Stifter's realism.[197] As true as it is that any claim to a universal moral order would have to account for the wolves,[198] the fact that they are not strictly antithetical to the poetic realist project does not alter the fact that the scene also calls the project into question. This is especially apparent if we consider that the wolf attack takes place at the gallows and the "Galgeneiche" ("gallows-oak"). The narrator passes the gallows and the gallows-oak early in the novella, and is told that whereas people used to be hanged from the tree, the human structure has replaced it as a means of execution. But whether the instrument of execution is a tree or a human

[196] Stifter, HKG 1,5 : 470. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 138.
[197] Dittmann, "Brigitta und kein Ende. Kommentierte Randbemerkungen," 26.
[198] The problem is similar to the moral character of the solar eclipse in "Die Sonnenfinsternis am 8. Juli 1842": "Nur sofern Natur für Stifter prinzipiell vernünftig ist, wenn auch noch nicht der menschlichen Vernunft in allen Aspekten zugänglich, beweist sich hier überhaupt Vernunft. Gemessen an den Grundsätzen der Ethik seit Kant ist Stifters Beschreibung der Sonnenfinsternis amoralisch. Ihr moralischer Anspruch rekurriert auf einen frühaufklärerischen, physikotheologischen Vernunftbegriff." Geulen, Worthörig wider Willen, 22.

construct *made of* trees, the gallows ensure the continuity of Brigitta and Murai's claim to power and their existence speaks to what Stifter would consider the animal side of human nature.[199] Together the gallows and the gallows-oak are emblematic of the political ambivalence of nature. They suggest animality from above to suppress the animality from below, an animalism that for Stifter would later characterize what he took to be the excesses of the 1848 revolution. Within the context of the novella the gallows and the gallows-oak are anything but alien to the landscape, because they are expressive of the element of coercion that also structures the production of nature and that therefore also feeds into Stifter's realism.[200] These are the real conditions of the novella's restorative gesture, that which lies behind the narrator's statement that with the reunification of Brigitta and Murai "alles war nun gut" ("all was now well").[201]

The restoration of the family completes the process of the subject grounding himself in a place. When the narrator, who previously had nothing steady in the world save his walking stick, departs from the Puszta for his home in the Rhineland, he is exporting the spirit of being rooted in a place through the productive work in nature he saw in practice at Uvar and Marosheley.[202] The stakes are national: "Im Frühjahre nahm ich wieder mein deutsches Gewand, meinen

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[199] Barbara Osterkamp writes of the gallows and the gallows tree, "Das Bild ist nur allzu sprechend, denn inmitten ungezähmter Natur steht der Galgen fast wie ein Bann: nicht nur vor dem Unberechenbaren des Unkultivierten gilt es sich zu schützen, sondern auch vor denen, die den Rechtsanspruch Brigittas und Stefans mißachten. So wird auch ihr Kind gerade an jenem Galgen von den Wölfen angefallen; sein Tod aber hätte die Kontinuität von Herrschaft in Frage gestellt. Das Bild feindlicher Natur birgt somit zugleich auch die Bedrohung durch den Menschen." Osterkamp, Arbeit und Identität, 141–142. Von Zimmermann argues that Osterkamp's reading is too narrow, and connects the political threat of the unsettled locals to the wild side of humanity. See von Zimmermann, "‚Brigitta' - seelenkundlich gelesen," 432.

[200] C.f. Hunter-Lougheed: "Das vom Menschen geschaffene Todesinstrument zur Bestrafung gesellschaftsgefährdenden Verhaltens steht wie ein Fremdkörper in der Landschaft." Hunter-Lougheed, "Adalbert Stifter: *Brigitta* (1844/47)," 366. They are therefore also more than a symbolical divide cultivated form uncultivated nature, as Benno von Wiese argues in "Adalbert Stifter: Brigitta," 199.

[201] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 475. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 143. Rosemarie Hunter-Lougheed points out that in spite of the claim to all being well, the danger posed by the wolves has not been removed and always remains as a possibility. See Hunter-Lougheed, "Adalbert Stifter: *Brigitta,"* 378.

[202] For a narratological schematization of the narrator's *Bildungsweg* see Michael Boehringer, *The Telling Tactics of Narrative Strategies in Tieck, Kleist, Stifter, and Storm* (New York: P. Lang, 1999), 80–81.

deutschen Stab und wanderte dem deutschen Vaterlande zu" ("In the spring I put on my German costume again, took my German walking-stick and set off on foot towards my German homeland").[203] The accoutrements of the wanderer are connected now to a specific nation as the narrator sets off for a life presumably resembling the ideal of Uvar and Marosheley in his own country. The narrator has already mentioned the extent to which western Europe has been cultivated, mentioning the vineyards on the Rhine and the English gardens, so the project he is initiating is not new, but rather one of renewal. This renewal is situated in an adamantly nationalist framework; all of the narrators things are specifically German, meaning that it is not just the things themselves that stabilize meaning but their national identity as well.

On the way the narrator passes Gabriele's grave, telling us that she had died at he peak of her physical beauty. Gabriele's grave completes the novella's aesthetic program. With age Murai has advanced into the proper appreciation of real beauty that the narrator lays out in the preface to the novella. Gabriele's death marks the transience of the false beauty of appearances, and because this beauty was her sole characteristic and determines her function as a device in the novella, she has to pass with her beauty. What remains is what Brigitta calls at the moment of reconciliation "ein sanftes Gesetz der Schönheit, das uns ziehet" ("a gentle law of beauty which attracts us").[204] This is not yet the famous "gentle law" of the preface to *Bunte Steine*, although it does anticipate that gentle law in a few key ways. Brigitta is telling Murai that in spite of her pride, it was a seeming externality that brought them back together. This externality is not the cosmic world preserving of the preface, but instead the moral beauty that comes from the cheerful abyss. Brigitta declares herself to have reached the position of the "we" that the narrator

[203] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 475. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 143.
[204] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 473. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 141.

posits in the beginning, the we whose hearts are capable of distinguishing beauty in any context. As we have seen the production of a subjugated nature is key to arriving at this state, and so the novella's poetic program takes an affirmative stance towards the social production of nature. But the stabilizing frame that is introduced at the beginning of the novella does not remove all doubts about the human transformation of the environment, any more than it renders harmless the story's problematic gender dynamics, class relations, or colonial implications.

The cheerful abyss metaphor, then, not only never overcomes the connotations of an emptiness or a void to lend ethical character to human work on the environment, but is structurally dependent upon its more sinister implications. It stands in for the general, world-preserving that Stifter speaks of in the preface, even as it is based partly in the nihilism it would otherwise counteract. The problem appears in Stifter's earlier story *Abdias*, to which I now turn in order to consider the tension over the character of nature and how the novel imagines the possible meanings of individual fortune and misfortunes.

Cultivation and Catastrophe: Abdias

In the preface to *Bunte Steine*, Stifter argues that the small things in nature are an expression of the gentle law, the guiding, world-preserving structure that sustains sensible reality. The natural catastrophe here is an aberration, a spectacle whose significance as an expression of reality is overdetermined by casual observers. The wolves in *Brigitta* are themselves a kind of natural catastrophe: their appearance is an eruption of wild nature, one that does not hinder the harmonious restoration of the family at the end. Nevertheless they do raise skepticism about the realist program to the extent that they make its self-deconstructive side visible, even as they are

assigned a place in the totality of the universe. As in *Brigitta* and the preface to *Bunte Steine*, *Abdias* is interested in the possibility of a higher order reality that provides a stabilizing framework for the perceptible. In *Abdias*, too, the closest that humans can come to comprehending the ideal is by looking to nature. But where the gardens of *Brigitta* purport to reveal a harmony that human observers would otherwise miss in uncultivated nature, the realist project in *Abdias* is situated not only within the indecisiveness of the novella's theoretical introduction on the structure of reality, but between competing visions of human coexistence with nature in the text.

Abdias follows the life of its titular protagonist and the vicissitudes of fortune that befall him. Abdias is born into a community of African Jews, a community that occupies the ruins of a Roman city in the process of being consumed by the desert. His father sends him out as a young man, and he travels the world learning to become a trader. Abdias becomes very wealthy, enters into marriage with a woman who inwardly rejects him on account of scars left behind from a case of pox he contracted during his travels. Abdias manages to make an enemy of Melek by refusing him a loan, and Melek ultimately plunders the Roman city. During the attack, Abdias' wife dies in childbirth. Abdias takes his daughter Ditha to Europe, where he acquires a remote mountain valley and begins building a house there. He finds there that his daughter is blind, until one evening she is struck by lightning and miraculously gains the power of vision, and Abdias sets about familiarizing her with the sight of an environment she knew primarily through touch.

Abdias' story in the second half of the novella, after his arrival in Europe, is similar to the stories of Murai and later Risach insofar as it also situates the cultivation of the environment within a *cultura agri* as *cultura animi* paradigm. But unlike Murai and Risach he pursues his

work sporadically, and in so doing misses the project of bringing nature to itself, as Risach claims to do in his garden. As opposed to the utopian cultivation that we see in *Brigitta*, cultivation in *Abdias* exists in tension with nature's destructive forces, but also with a third alternative for the status of the human relative to the more-than-human environment: the undifferentiated immanence that Ditha has with her surroundings, an immanence that the novella holds forward as a tantalizing third way before eliminating it with her death in a second lightning storm.

Abdias also poses the epistemological problem that Stifter raises with the "cheerful abyss," but the difference here is not only the possibility of knowing reality, but whether there even is anything beyond the dumb workings of natural law in the first place. The opening of *Abdias* adds to the overall image of an ideal that grounds reality in the question of theodicy: how is human misfortune possible in a harmonious universe?[205] The narrator first introduces the opposition of the classical notion of "fate" (*Fatum*) with the more contemporary "destiny" (*Schicksal*)*:* where in the latter God is responsible for everything that happens in creation, in the former there is nothing beyond the laws governing nature, to which even the gods are subject. Natural laws themselves in the introduction to *Abdias* are a matter of dumb mechanics, they alone do not yet vouch for reality in the way that the gentle law does in the preface to *Bunte Steine*. The narrator notes:

> Aber es liegt auch wirklich etwas Schauderndes in der gelassenen Unschuld, womit die Naturgesetze wirken, daß uns ist, als lange ein unsichtbarer Arm aus

[205] For more on the question of theodicy in *Abdias* and its connection to eighteenth century debates on the subject see Rudolf Jansen, "Die Quelle des „Abdias" in den Entwürfen zur „Scientia Generalis" von G.W. Leibniz?," *VASILO* 13, no. 3/4 (1964): 57–69. On the subject of Stifter and the Enlightenment see also Wilhelm Kühlmann, "Von Diderot bis Stifter. Das Experiment aufklärerischer Anthropologie in Stifters Novelle 'Abdias,'" in *Adalbert Stifter: Dichter und Maler, Denkmalpfleger und Schulmann. Neue Zugänge zu seinem Werk*, ed. Hartmut Laufhütte and Karl Möseneder (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996), 395–409. See also H.R. Klieneberger, "Stifter's Abdias and Its Interpreters," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 14 (1978): 335–337.

> der Wolke und thue vor unsern Augen das Unbegreifliche. Denn heute kömmt mit derselben holden Miene Segen, und morgen geschieht das Entsetzliche. Und ist beides aus, dann ist in der Natur die Unbefangenheit, wie früher.[206]
>
> But there is indeed, too, something terrifying in the indifferent innocence with which the laws of Nature operate, so that it seems to us as though an invisible arm were reaching out of the clouds and enacting the incomprehensible before our eyes. For a blessing comes with the same smiling face today and tomorrow the terrible happens. And when both are over, Nature is dispassionate as before.[207]

Because individuals share in good and ill fortune unequally, the problem here is the uneven applicability of natural laws. In the introduction to the novella the equanimity of nature before and after events bringing both good and ill fortune to humans testifies to the indifference of nature itself. The examples Stifter gives of the boy who falls and drowns in the pool, whereupon the pool returns to its usual stillness, or the Bedouin suddenly struck dead by lightening both illustrate the principle of nature's "indifferent innocence." But whatever model of the structure of the universe accounts for individual catastrophes in nature, both "fate" and "destiny" can be read as models of a harmonious universe because no event unsettles nature's equanimity.[208] But locating the moment of harmony within the material, as the model of fate does, borders on atheism by elevating natural laws to the ultimate reality, while the destiny model here makes it look as if God intervenes capriciously in the world. The problem of fate and destiny also leaves us with a hermeneutic question: how can we interpret particular cases of catastrophe in order to understand the general order of the universe and how it structures human lives?[209] The preface to

[206] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 237.

[207] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 21.

[208] See Hartmut Laufhütte, "Von der Modernität eines Unmodernen. Anläßlich der Erzählung Abdias von Adalbert Stifter," *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts* 1 (1994): 68.

[209] Eva Geulen shows how *Abdias* thematizes the relation between revelation and hiding and says of the preface specifically that, "Die Abdiasvorrede und ihre Blumenkette gehören zu jenem Typus quasi meta-literarischer, hemeneutischer Reflexionen, die den Erzählungen mit der Zeit immanent werden. „Abdias" markiert eine Übergangsphase dieser Entwicklung, da die Einleitung, im Gegensatz etwas zum ‚Sanften Gesetz' deutlich an dem Text partizipiert, dem sie vorangeht. Andererseits bleibt diese Lese- und Interpretationsanleitung seltsam abstrakt und ohne einsichtigen Bezug auf die erzählte Geschichte des Abdias." Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen*, 60–61.

Bunte Steine seems to answer this by saying that we need to look at particular instances of moral harmony in the natural and in the social spheres and not be distracted by singular, destructive events. *Abdias* leaves the question more open: the narrator is sure that perceptible reality is a matter of natural laws, but the question is the character of the force behind the natural laws and possibly whether there really is such a higher instance in the first place.

The narrator extends a third possibility that answers the theodicy question without deciding between two dichotomous structures of reality. Neither fate nor destiny,

> ...sondern eine heitre Blumenkette hängt durch die Unendlichkeit des Alls und sendet ihren Schimmer in die Herzen – die Kette der Ursachen und Wirkungen – und in das Haupt des Menschen ward die schönste dieser Blumen geworfen, die Vernunft, das Auge der Seele, die Kette daran anzuknüpfen, und an ihr Blume um Blume, Glied um Glied hinabzuzählen bis zuletzt zu jener Hand, in der das Ende ruht.[210]

> ...rather, a serene chain of flowers hangs through the infinity of the universe and transmits its shimmer into men's hearts – the chain of cause and effect – and into man's brain was cast the most beautiful of these flowers, reason, the eye of the soul, in order to attach the chain to it and by means of it to count his way down flower by flower, link by link, until he comes finally to that hand in which the end rests.[211]

Reason in general occupies in the chain of flowers metaphor the role occupied by the researcher in the 1852 preface: it carefully accumulates knowledge of particulars in order to understand the world-preserving. The chain of flowers is infinite, but like the book of nature that Drendorf imagines in *Nachsommer*, it is as a whole knowable from the perspective of the divine. The divine hand here stabilizes the causal chain, unlike the destiny model: in the latter the divine hand reaches from the clouds to affect human affairs, in the former the hand holds the particulars together in a coherent form. Because God here plays the role of stabilizer at the end of the chain

[210] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 238.
[211] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 22.

of flowers, the metaphor does away with the theodicy question and with the atheistic implications of fate.[212] But what forbids an acceptance of the chain of flowers model here in the introduction is that the narrative presents it as only a tentative solution to the question of how reality is structured. The narrator says at the outset that it *may* be neither fate nor destiny, and even if the chain of flowers is ultimately a model for the universe, human knowledge has only partially glimpsed what that reality might look like. And so the chain of flowers necessarily remains a hypothetical answer to the theodicy problem, leaving the question of what structures reality in the ultimate instance essentially open.

It is in the ambiguity of the validity of the chain of flowers model that the natural and the social collapse into simple antagonism. If there is no rational order behind the workings of cause and effect, then all we are left with is human domination versus the power of non-human nature, a consequence of Stifter's realism that as we saw continues through to *Nachsommer.* Neither in the introduction nor in the story do we find a clear answer to the fate, destiny, or chain of flowers problem. Instead we have the question of what can be read in the signs of nature in general, which is a separate question from what can be read in nature as it appears in the narrative itself.[213] For his part, the narrator excuses himself from the interpretive problem by simply saying, "Wir wollen nicht weiter grübeln, wie es sei in diesen Dingen, sondern schlechthin von einem Manne erzählen, an dem sich manches davon darstellte, und von dem es ungewiß ist, ob

[212] "Gottes Hand entdecken heißt indes bei Stifter nicht den Weltlauf als gerechtfertigt erfahren, denn Gott wird nicht als sinnstiftende, sondern einzig als organisierende Instanz thematisiert." Matthias Kamann, *Epigonalität als ästhetisches Vermögen: Untersuchungen zu Texten Grabbes und Immermanns, Platens und Raabes, zur Literaturkritik des 19. Jahrhunderts und zum Werk Adalbert Stifters* (Stuttgart: M&P, 1994), 178.

[213] That there is a causal relationship between the reflections developed in the introduction and the narrative of Abdias' life is not at all clear. The attempt to apply the introduction in interpreting the story leads to aporias, not in the least because the key events in the story cannot be reduced to direct cause and effect relationships. On this point see Laufhütte, "Von der Modernität eines Unmodernen. Anläßlich der Erzählung Abdias von Adalbert Stifter," 66. and Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen*, 66-67.

sein Schicksal ein seltsameres Ding sei, oder sein Herz" ("Let us not ponder the nature of these things further but simply tell of a man who exemplifies much of this and of whom it is uncertain which is stranger, his destiny or his heart").[214] Even in excusing himself, the narrator poses new interpretive problems: Abdias' life story is assigned here an illustrative role, even as the promise of a definitive answer to the question of natural laws and theodicy is withheld. The destiny-heart opposition sets the story between the two poles of outer nature – the natural laws and the possible world sustaining instance beyond – and inner, human nature. The opposition is mapped out onto the scenes of ruination and productive activity in nature, with Abdias occupying both extremes at different points in the story. At stake is not just the stability of the realist project, but whether there is a point at which such a project can even begin, whether there even is an ideal reality to go looking for. The skepticism over a reality higher than nature is more radical than in the later *Brigitta*. Even the establishment of the house and a line of generational continuity at the end is at best a weak endorsement of the chain of flowers model: one family's gain is the loss of another, leaving us where we began with the problem of the unequal way in which good and ill fortune befall humans.[215]

The Roman ruins in the Atlas Mountains where Abdias begins his life are a negative image of the estates at Uvar and Marosheley: as opposed to productive work on nature integrating the space into a narrative of global progress, we encounter an "aus der Geschichte

[214] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 239. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 22.

[215] If the chain of flowers metaphor is definitely an answer to the theodicy question, then we could argue that Abdias' end is actually not so unfortunate, as it has its place in the ideal structure of things that orders the universe. This is Johann Lachinger's argument when he argues that Abdias' end has a sense to it: "Denn der Wahnsinn des Heimgesuchten ist eine nur in seinem zeitlichen Leben nachwirkende Folgeerscheinung. Stifter hat es nicht an subtilen symbolhaften Andeutungen fehlen lassen, um zu zeigen, daß Abdias' Leben und Geschick schließlich doch – wenn auch endgültig erst jenseits seines Todes – in dem großen positiven Gesamtzusammenhang des Kosmos aufgehoben sind." Johann Lachinger, "Adalbert Stifters „Abdias": Eine Interpretation," *VASILO* 18, no. 3/4 (1969): 101.

verlorene Römerstadt" ("an old Roman town lost to history").[216] The city no longer appears on any map, and has long since lost its name, but it is home to a community of Jews. "Düstre, schwarze, schmutzige Juden gingen wie Schatten in den Trümmern herum, gingen drinnen aus und ein, und wohnten drinnen mit dem Schakal, den sie manchmal fütterten" ("Dark, melancholy, dirty Jews moved around in the rubble like shadows, went in and out among it and lived in it with the jackal which they sometimes fed").[217] Georg Simmel wrote that the ruin is where decay has destroyed the unity of form to reveal the antagonism of nature and spirit, but which also excites for acquiring a new unity determined in part by the forces of nature.[218] From the perspective both of Stifter's realism and the telos of the story, the ruin lacks the moment of pleasure. Instead the lack of productive work results in what appears to be an empty parallel existence of human and nature, even though humans remain embedded in natural processes.[219] Instead of ordering nature the Jewish community allows the processes of ruination and decay to run their course, and instead of animal husbandry they pass food on to a wild animal, their resident jackal.

The lack of interaction between humans and the desert environment in the ruined city gives the appearance of a sharp delineation between nature and the sphere of exchange. The

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[216] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 239. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 23.

[217] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 240. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 23.

[218] In his essay "Die Ruine: Ein ästhetischer Versuch," Simmel writes "In dem Augenblick aber, wo der Verfall des Gebäudes die Geschlossenheit der Form zerstört, treten die Parteien wieder auseinander und offenbaren ihre weltdurchziehende ursprüngliche Feindschaft: als sei die künstlerische Formung nur eine Gewalttat des Geistes gewesen, der sich der Stein widerwillig unterworfen hat, als schüttle er dieses Joch nun allmählich ab und kehre wieder in die selbständige Gesetzlichkeit seiner Kräfte zurück." Georg Simmel, "Die Ruine: Ein ästhetischer Versuch," in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993), 125. But "[es] ist der Reiz der Ruine, daß hier ein Menschenwerk ganz wie ein Naturprodukt empfunden wird. Dieselben Kräfte, die durch Verwitterung, Ausspülung, Zusammenstürzen, Ansetzen von Vegetation dem Berge seine Gestalt verschaffen, haben sich hier an dem Gemäuer wirksam erwiesen." Ibid., 126.

[219] This circumstance is one of the significant aporias that frustrate any attempt to apply the novella's introduction to the story, as Hartmut Laufhütte points out. "Es herrscht eine kalte Beziehungslosigkeit zwischen den Abläufen der Naturdinge und denen des menschlichen Lebens, das gleichwohl in sie einbezogen ist." Laufhütte, "Von der Modernität eines Unmodernen. Anläßlich der Erzählung Abdias von Adalbert Stifter," 67.

people, after all, are traders, and unlike Murai and Risach, their daily economic activity is not locally bound. This circumstance determines Abdias' early biography, as he travels far and wide in order to build his fortune. Life in the ruined city represents a problematic relation to nature. If for Stifter's realism the moral world-sustaining order can be seen through special attention to the small and particular, then the kind of broad network of exchange from which the Jewish community sustains itself is a kind of false totality. Trade in the novella spans the globe, as Abdias' travels show, but lacks the kind of moral rootedness in place that is embodied in figures such as Murai and Risach. In much ecocritical rhetoric on place this mode of relating (or rather, not relating) to one's environment is a symptom of life under an economic order that also causes environmental stress. Place orientation in this view extends the promise of of an environmental responsiveness, which is not only a matter of human consciousness but of the referential capacity of a literary text.[220] While place orientation is not the sum of environmental sensitivity, as Lawrence Buell points out, "it seems indisputable that the self-conscious commitment to place . . . would more likely produce or accompany environmental responsiveness than would atopia or diaspora."[221] In spite of its supposed virtues for environmental politics, place rhetoric's focus on

[220] A representative example of this view would be the way in which Robert Kern describes his approach to Jane Austen in his article "Ecocriticism: What is it Good For?" He writes, "Specificaly, I am proposing both to assert and to test the assumption that all texts are at least potentially environmental (and therefore susceptible to ecocriticism or ecologically informed reading) in the sense that all texts are literally and/or imaginatively situated in place, and in the sense that their authors, consciously or not, inscribe within them a certain relation to place." Kern, "Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For?," 10. As David Harvey points out, such literature itself is already predicated on a political-economic order dominated by exchange-value. "The evocation of the particular qualities of place becomes a means to explore an alternative esthetic to that offered through the restless spatial flows of commodities and money. This required a deep and often contemplative familiarity with local fauna and flora, soil qualities, geologies, and the like, as well as the intricate history of human occupancy, environmental modification and the embedding of human labor in the land, particularly in the built environment." David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, 303.

[221] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 253. This is not to deny the abuses to which an analytic of place can be put, as Buell acknowledges in his chapter on the concept in his 2001 book *Writing for an Endangered World.* "On the contrary, place attachment can itself become pathological: can abet possessiveness, ethnocentrism, xenophobia." Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World*, 76. Its abuse, Buell rightfully argues, does not invalidate its usefulness as an environmental ethic and aesthetic. Ibid., 77–78.

the local and the particular is politically ambivalent, as critics have pointed out (and its proponents have often acknowledged).[222] But for Stifter and from the perspective of his realism, the extent to which we can speak of a sense of place is through environmental transformation.

The place problematic is not incidental to the politics of *Abdias* because it is here where the novella traffics most explicitly in anti-Semitic imagery. Ruth Klüger has argued that *Abdias* is not really anti-Semitic because Abdias is not a negative figure. Instead his is the tragedy of the outsider, one whose outside status is a matter of a lack of spiritual orientation.[223] Nonetheless a number of anti-Semitic stereotypes come into play in the novella: the Wandering Jew, greed, isolationism, etc., forming what Joseph Metz describes as "a signifying chain that binds the novella's protagonist as securely as that metaphoric 'chain of cause and effect' so dear to the narrator."[224] And Martha Helfer has argued that "in its purportedly objective descriptions of

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[222] David Harvey, for instance, points out that while place can inspire local resistance that can expand outwards into a larger environmental politics, it also yields limited knowledge of the environment relative to global ecological processes while also fetishizing sensuous interaction between the human body and the environment. See David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Ecology of Difference*, 303-304. Of particular relevance here is Ursula Heise's exploration of the place analytic in American environmental discourse. Heise argues that while an analytic of place is certainly useful from a political perspective, it becomes "a visionary dead end if it is understood as a founding ideological principle or a principal didactic means of guiding individuals and communities back ot nature." Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21. Her critique of place in ecocriticism is of particular relevance in this context: "The underlying problem that persists in the writings of those environmental and ecocritical thinkers who recognize the importance of the global is that they do not, by and large, question the assumption that identity, whether individual or communitarian, is constituted by the local. The crucial insights of the last twenty years of cultural theory into the ways local and national identities depend on excluded others, how they rely on but often deny their own hybrid mixtures with other places and cultures, and in what ways real and imagined travel to other places shapes self-definitions have not left any lasting marks on American environmentalist and ecocritical thought." Ibid., 42.

[223] Ruth Angress [Klüger], "Wunsch- und Angstbilder: Jüdische Gestalten aus der deutschen Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts," in *Kontroversen, alte und neue: Akten des VII. Internationaler Germanisten-Kongreß* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1986), 93.

[224] Joseph Metz, "The Jew as Sign in Stifter's *Abdias*," *The Germanic Review* 77, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 220. Metz sees, however, in the novella's deployment of anti-Semitic imagery another example of the double nature of Stifter's realism. On the one hand, Metz argues, the anti-Semitic stereotypes fall short of their function as a reality-stabilizing device, while secondly the text seems "to double back on itself and undermine its tropology of anti-Semitism, including both the expected verification of anti-Semitic knowledge by a future science and the current overwhelming chain of anti-Semitic signifiers strung throughout the narrative." Ibid., 225.

nature . . . *Abdias* inscribes an inherently anti-Semitic, anti-assimilationist political agenda."[225] I agree with both critics in that it is in the relation between Abdias and the particular form that the world-sustaining takes in the text that the novella becomes at least tinged with anti-Semitism. It is the lack of place-connectedness that makes this specifically Jewish community a negative image of the "first coexistence with nature" that the narrator of *Brigitta* celebrates in Murai. When the otherwise separated human and natural spheres do intersect in the first half of the novella prior to the arrival in Europe, it appears to be an instance of ill fortune visited upon humans. The image of ruination is the most protracted instance of how humans are subject to a destructive nature, but we also see the catastrophic intersection of the "natural" and the "social" in the instances of disease that occur at key moments in the text: the blankets, as we have already seen, sometimes carry plague, Abdias is afflicted with a disease that leaves him pockmarked during his first trip into the world, and the ship Abdias travels on to Europe is quarantined with its people and its goods. In these instances destructive nature appears in the middle of the realm of exchange, an activity that the novella faults for alienating man from nature. In addition, the moment when the people in the ruined city seem most attached to nature is during the rainy season, which brings disease to people even as it benefits their gardens, pointing again to the ambivalence of nature towards the human. The lack of connection to the natural environment will vary for Abdias as he moves between the career as a trader that he was raised into and productive work on nature. But he never entirely achieves the passionlessness of the "first coexistence with nature" that characterizes Murai.

Whereas in the 1852 preface it is the slow rhythm of non-exceptional nature that is poetic,

[225] See Martha Helfer, "Natural Anti-Semitism: Stifter's Abdias," *Deutsche Viertelsjahrschrift Für Literaturwissenschaft Und Geistesgeschichte* 78, no. 2 (2004): 261–286, here 265.

in *Abdias*, particularly in the desert, the "normal" condition of nature is what raises the theodicy question in the first place. The natural catastrophe is an exceptional event of nature's "indifferent innocence" towards the destruction of the individual. The images of the boy whose drowning death in the pool only momentarily disturbs the surface of the water and of the Bedouin struck by lightning are heuristics: if we apply these to the image of nature in the desert, then the desert in its non-exceptional state does not reflect anything like the world-preserving that we see in the preface, or even the harmony of the chain of flowers metaphor. Instead the the workings of the desert seem to fall on the side of fate, as desert sand will inevitably consume the things and the spaces that humans produce. Not coincidentally, we have here a classical city subject to the classical conception of the universe. And so the Roman triumphal arch is halfway buried in sand already, a process that is no less catastrophic for being slow moving. And while the rainy season brings life to the desert, that too vanishes in the all-consuming sands.

> An der Oberfläche des Bodens waren die Wirkungen des Regens bald verschwunden, er war dürr und staubig, daß die Bewohner an den Regen wie an ein Märchen zurückdachten; nur die tiefer gelegenen Wurzeln und Brunnen empfanden noch die Güte der unendlichen, zu einem aufzubewahrenden Schatze hineingesunkenen Menge des Wassers. Aber auch das minderte sich immer mehr und mehr, die kurzlebenden grünen Hügel wurden röthlich, und an vielen Stellen blickte Weiß aus ihnen hervor, was den täglich heiteren Himmel immer dunkler und blauer und die Sonne immer geschnittener und feuriger machte.[226]
>
> The effects of the rain quickly vanished from the surface of the ground and it was dry and sandy, so that to the inhabitants the rain seemed a [fairy tale]; only the deeper roots and wells could sense how beneficial the huge quantity of water was, now sunk to be a treasure worthy of conservation. And that too was diminished constantly, the short-lived green hills became reddish and in many places white showed through them, which made the always clear sky look darker and bluer, the sun sharper and more fiery.[227]

The green of the hills is an exception in the desert, the water table quickly sinks back out of

[226] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 285.
[227] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 55.

reach, and the effect of the hills is to accentuate the extreme colors of the otherwise cheerful sky, so that the sun itself appears deadlier. The desert rain itself is ambivalent in terms of what it brings to the community: it sustains life, but the rainy season is also a season of disease, as we have already seen, and it turns the rubble into mud. The comparison of the rainy season to a fairy tale has both formal and epistemological implications for Stifter's realism. At the epistemological level we have an implicit claim as to what counts as reality, with the dryness being more real than the short period of wetness because the dryness constitutes the environment's usual condition. The formal claim emerges from the epistemological claim: the rain and the fairy tale belong together because the text regards both as aberrations, the former seasonal, the latter generic, a distinction Stifter's realism draws as its point of departure is the location of the signs of the general and world-preserving in the normal condition of the object-world.

But even as the empty dryness of the desert is figured as normal and also natural, the novella shifts towards a view of the desert that will be closer to the assurance of the world-preserving in *Brigitta*. The emptiness of the desert as a physical space is evocative of the account of fate in the novella's introduction. Unlike the inside of Abdias' apartment, which is strewn with the things of his trade, or the well-planned cistern that he maintains (and that is perhaps the single instance of harmonious interaction between human and environment in the desert) there are no things in the desert that might suggest any sort of order or meaning, it is "gegenstandslos" ("featureless").[228] The only time the desert does gain contours that allow for a differentiation of

[228] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 278. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 50. "Daß Stifter immer wieder von den Dingen spricht, deutet genau auf die polare Artung seines künstlersichen Bemühens: das Gegenständliche als ein in sich geschlossenes, konkretes Da-Sein anschauend zu verstehen und ihm eine typisierende, zum metaphysischen Gesetzhaften erhöhende Allgemeinheit zu geben. In die Erkenntnis der Dinge ist immer die Erkenntnis ihres Wesens, ihrer Natur, damit ihrer eigenen Wahrhaftigkeit eingeschlossen, die still aus ihrem So-Sein spricht." Fritz Martini, *Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus, 1848-1898*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1981), 509–510.

things is in the rainy season. But if the rainy season does not yet rise to the status of reality, then we cannot argue that the green that appears on the hillsides or the water that flows into the cisterns really signify any reality beyond the immediately perceptible workings of nature. The desert, which occupies the first half of the story, instead embodies the emptiness of the fate model of the universe. And so nature as meaningless void plays perceptual tricks: the blue mountains Abdias sees during his journey through the desert after quitting the Roman city, we are told, "standen stundenlange so klar und deutlich da, ohne daß es schien, daß man sich ihnen nur zollbreit genährt hätte" ("but they stood for hours so clear and distinct that it seemed as though the travellers were only inching their way towards them"),[229] while the occasional eagle hanging above "in den leeren Lüften . . . als zöge ein glänzender Engel über ihren Häuptern mit" ("hung above them in the empty air . . . as though a shining angel were traveling with them above their heads").[230] The first person narrator of *Brigitta* experiences uncultivated nature in the same way, but the difference in *Abdias* is that nature as void is never countered fully because Abdias only sporadically pursues a project of cultivation.

Abdias' move from the desert in the Atlas Mountains to the mountains in Europe is to an extent an overcoming of the fate model of reality and the emptiness that it entails. With Abdias' departure on the ship to Europe it is the dry desert that becomes the unreal other: Abdias watches the north African coast recede from view until "das Land endlich gleichsam wie ein thörichtes Märchen eingesunken war" ("[the] land finally vanished like a foolish [fairy tale]").[231] The perspective is undeniably Eurocentric, with Africa an environment that has to be overcome both aesthetically and epistemologically. The fact that Europe is in need of cultivation as well does

[229] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 291. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 59.
[230] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 296. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 62.
[231] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 298. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 64.

not make the representation of Africa or of the Jewish community living in the Roman city any less problematic. The move to Europe, in any event, is a move away from the emptiness of the desert and towards a vision of productive work in and on nature that represents Stifter's pastoral ideal. Abdias is motivated by an inner sense of affinity with Europe and the Europeans to move north. "Er dachte, er sehne sich nach dem kalten, feuchten Welttheile Europa, es wäre gut, wenn er wüßte, was dort die Weisen wissen, und wenn er lebte, wie dort die Edlen leben" ("He thought he was longing for the cold damp continent of Europe and that it would be good if he knew what the wise men knew there and lived as the noblemen live there").[232] The move is motivated by the homology between inner and outer nature that Stifter argues for in the preface to *Bunte Steine.* But the thought of integration into Europe Abdias expresses early in the novella falters as the narrator casts him as irredeemably African. It is an example of *Abdias*' structural environmental determinism when the narrator says of Abdias, his daughter Ditha, and the slave Uram upon their disembarkation in Europe that they have on them "dasselbe Grau der Wüste und der Ferne, wie auf den Thieren der Wildniß eine Fremde, verwitterte Farbe zu liegen pflegt" ("to all three clung the same grey of the desert and of distant countries, just as a strange weathered colour can be seen on the animals of the wilderness").[233] The narrator concludes that as different as his life is in Africa, "allein er hatte den afrikanischen Geist und die Natur der Einsamkeit nach Europa gebracht" ("he had brought his African soul and his desert nature to Europe with him").[234]

The environmental determinism that constitutes Abdias' outsider status is in the novella also given as a reason for the incompleteness of his integration into his chosen European homeland. Where Murai and Brigitta cultivate the Puszta so as to bring it into a process of

[232] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 250. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 31.
[233] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 300. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 65.
[234] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 334. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 89.

historical development of a moral world order, Abdias chooses to settle in the valley precisely in order to maintain the isolation he knew in Africa: "Was die meisten abgeschreckt hatte, das Thal zur Wohnung zu nehmen, die Oede und Unfruchtbarkeit: das zog ihn vielmehr an, weil es eine Aehnlichkeit mit der Leiblichkeit der Wüste hatte" ("What had deterred most people from living in the valley, its [wasteland] and barrenness, attracted him because it had a similarity to the desert").[235]We learn of the valley that it is well outside of human economic history.

> Es führt keine Straße durch, auf der Wägen und Wanderer kämen, es hat keinen Strom, auf dem Schiffe erschienen, es hat keine Reichtümer und Schönheiten, um die Reiselust zu locken, und so mag es oft Jahrzehnte da liegen, ohne daß irgendein irrender Wanderer über seinen Rasen ginge. Aber ein sanfter Reiz der Oede und Stille liegt darüber ausgegossen.[236]
>
> No road runs through it with carts and foot-passengers, it has no river with boats, it has no riches or beautiful views to attract travellers, and so it can often lie there for decades without one wanderer crossing its meadows. But the soft charm of [the wasteland] and stillness lies over it. . .[237]

Abdias is not motivated by the potential of the valley, even if his actions realize that potential at the end of the novella, but instead by a desire to recreate the life he had in the desert he had taken leave of.

And so Abdias equips his house with security measures more fitting for the dangers he faced from Melek, decorates it in a way that resembles his rooms in the Roman city, and constructs it with thick walls and small windows in order to keep it cool, "wie er es ebenfalls in Afrika gelernt hatte" ("as he had learnt to do in Africa").[238] These, the narrator tells us, are "lauter Anstalten, die er in Europa nicht nöthig hatte" ("all arrangements that were unnecessary in Europe").[239] Abdias' house design perpetuates the image of the Jew as one alien to his own

[235] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 302. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 66. Translation modified.
[236] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 300.
[237] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 65. Translation modified.
[238] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 304. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 68.
[239] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 304. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 68.

environment, he is other precisely because his socialization of the valley happens not on the valley's but on the desert's terms. He is likewise slow to appreciate the resources available in the valley in Europe. With his well, for instance, he is at first careful not to use up too much water, remembering how quickly the water table in Africa sank after the rains. Only after two years does he realize he will not be able to consume all of the water at his disposal in the valley. Abdias' servant Uram, meanwhile, dies, the narrator gives the alien climate as the cause of his death.

The most extreme sign of Abdias' disconnect from the more than human world is the episode in which he shoots his dog Asu dead. Abdias is riding his donkey through the valley one day when Asu begins making strange noises, running wildly back and forth. Rabies has struck other dogs in the region, we learn, and so Abdias is concerned that Asu too may have contracted the virus. Abdias sees that Asu will not enter the water to cross a stream, that he is foaming at the mouth, and behaving in a seemingly erratic fashion, concludes he is indeed infected, and shoots him with the intention of ending his apparent suffering. Shortly thereafter does Abdias realize that he had left a bag of money behind, and returning to the spot finds that before dying Asu had dragged himself back to the location where Abdias had left it. The dog was not rabid, but instead was trying to alert Abdias to his oversight.

The episode is significant for a few reasons. As an example of Abdias' disconnect from the more than human world, the shooting of Asu is a failure on Abdias' part that occurs in spite of his knowledge of canine behavior and the symptoms of Rabies. Gunter Hertling points to the shooting of Asu as an example of Abdias' blindness and lack of understanding towards his dog,[240]

[240] Gunter Hertling, "Der Mensch und 'seine' Tiere: Versäumte Symbiose, versäumte Bildung. Zu Adalbert Stifters *Abdias*," *Modern Austrian Literature: Journal of the International Arthur Schnitzler Research Association* 18, no. 1 (1985): 1–26.

and Johann Lachinger argues that the death of the dog is the consequence of Abdias' own blindness,[241] but at the same time the novella is careful to note that he takes action only after careful observation of a preponderance of evidence: the noises, the erratic behavior, and the foam at the mouth. His failure is an inability to comprehend an instance of animal communication of the type Stifter imagined animals being capable of in the essay "Zur Psichologie der Tiere." Asu, on the other hand, has a stronger appreciation of human exchange relations – he is, after all, desperately trying to prevent Abdias from losing a sack of money. Abdias shoots Asu specifically with a Berber pistol, a detail that only reinforces the image of Abdias as one unable to achieve the relation to his immediate world exemplified in Freiherr von Risach. That Abdias is governed in part by his history in the environment of North Africa both prior to and immediately after the decision to shoot the dog is made more explicit in the first version of the story that appeared in 1842, where Abdias flies into a rage after realizing his mistake and, were it not for Ditha, would have taken his own life "in der Hitze seines afrikanischen Blutes" ("in the heat of his African blood").[242]

The Asu episode marks the persistence of an antagonistic division between the natural and the social within the novella, a division through which only nature's catastrophic and destructive forces manage to break through. But following the death of Asu the novella introduces Ditha as a possible alternative third way between an alienation from nature on the one hand and a problematic production of the environment on the other. Ditha is born blind, as

[241] Lachinger also writes, "Zurück und vorausweisend wird in [der Episode vom Hunde Asu] exemplarisch demonstriert, daß alles Leid, das Abdias widerfährt, nichts anderes ist als die Folge seiner furchtbaren inneren Verblendung, daß also niemand anderer Urheber seines Unglücks ist als er selbst. Wie er die Zeichen seines Hundes verkennt und sich selbst arges Leid zufügt, indem er sein Lieblingstier infolge eines Mißverständnisses erschießt, so täuscht er sich auch in den göttlichen Zeichen, die ihm gegeben wurden und die sich noch an seiner Tochter offenbaren werden." Lachinger, "Adalbert Stifters „Abdias": Eine Interpretation," 107.

[242] Stifter, HKG, 1,2 : 143.

Abdias belatedly discovers, and so like Brigitta, Ditha's early years are spent within her own internal world, speaking a language incomprehensible to anyone but herself. Kelly Meyer describes her condition in Lacanian terms, "For Ditha, there is neither a mirror stage nor a resulting division between subject and object, self and other. Instead she experiences life as a continuous interpenetration of self and world precluded by the advent of vision."[243] But her story raises an epistemological problem as well from the perspective of the realist program. Because she does not distinguish between objects or between herself as a subject and the objects in her environment, she is incapable of knowing reality in the way that the researcher does in the preface to *Bunte Steine.* Her father, on the other hand, does know the world as the researcher in the later text does, for example, he confirms empirically Ditha's blindness through a series of meticulous tests. In one he threatens to stick a pin in Ditha's eyeball, but only after controlling for the association of the pin with pain by sticking it first in her hand.

But on the other hand, Ditha herself appears as a node in a greater universal order precisely because she is incapable of knowing reality in the way that the researcher does. Unlike Brigitta, whose imprisonment in her own interiority made her isolated and violent, Ditha's universe extends outward into a kind of immanence with the valley. A fit of shaking befalls Ditha in apparent anticipation of the lightning strike that gives her sight, and the electricity connects her to the numinous reality that structures the universe. The first strike that "cures" her of her blindness is a kind of natural catastrophe, indeed the birdcage in the room melts, even as the bird survives. For Stifter electricity itself is connected to the world preserving. In his series of essays "Winterbriefe aus Kirchschlag" ("Winter Letters from Kirchschlag") from 1866 he offers the

[243] Kelly Middleton Meyer, "'Sohn, Abdias, gehe nun in die Welt...': Oedipalization, Gender Construction, and the Desire to Accumulate in Adalbert Stifter's 'Abdias,'" *Modern Austrian Literature: Journal of the Modern Austrian Literature and Culture Association* 35, no. 1/2 (2002): 1–21, here 12.

example of a man standing on a peak, where the feeling of the sublime is electrifying in a literal sense, "namentlich wenn man bedenkt, daß die electrische Spannung und Strömung der ganzen ungeheuren Himmelsgloke, die uns umfängt, auf unser Nervengewebe wie auf das feinste und edelste Saitenspiel wirkt" ("specifically when one considers that electrical tension and flowing of the whole enormous dome of heaven that surrounds us also works on our network of nerves like the finest and most noble string music").[244] Here electricity is to the universe as the chain of flowers is in the introduction to *Abdias*, and likewise it is the earth's magnetic field in the preface to *Bunte Steine* that is given as the all-encompassing reality otherwise imperceptible as such in the contingency of daily life.

Ditha's is a way of relating to the world that Abdias attempts to train out of her through a pedagogical program aimed at integrating her "in dem neuen Reich des Sehens" ("the new realm of sight").[245] For his part, the change in Ditha draws Abdias closer to the pastoral ideal, even as he remains removed from it. He turns away from the trading career he had resumed in her blindness and begins cultivating the valley, planting a flax field for Ditha's enjoyment.[246] But doing so has an ambiguous effect on her relation to the environment and to the universe more broadly. On the one hand the narrator draws on the chain of flowers imagery to describe the changes that sight inaugurates for Ditha.

> . . .aber wie man von jener fabelhaften Blume erzählt, die viele Jahre braucht, um im öden grauen Kraute zu wachsen, dann aber in wenigen Tagen einen schlanken Schaft emportreibt und gleichsam mit Knallen in einem prächtigen Thurm von

[244] Stifter, HKG, 8,2 : 330.
[245] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 326. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 84.
[246] That Abdias shifts between trading and cultivation is a detail that Benno von Wiese overlooks when he says of Abdias, "er selbst bleibt planend, jede Umwelt umformend, stets von neuem zum Aufbruch bereit, ohne daß die Dämonen von Reue und Schuld an ihn herankommen." Benno von Wiese, "Adalbert Stifter: Abdias," in *Die deutsche Novelle von Goethe bis Kafka: Interpretationen*, vol. 2 (Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1964), 136. This is only true at certain moments in the story, and indeed Abdias' orientation towards his environment depends on the ups and downs of his particular life story.

> Blumen aufbricht: – so schien es mit Ditha; seit die zwei Blumen ihres Hauptes aufgegangen waren, schoß ein ganz anderer Frühling rings um sie herum mit Blitzesschnelle empor; aber nicht allein die äußere Welt war ihr gegeben, sondern auch ihre Seele begann sich zu heben.[247]
>
> ...but just as we hear tell of that fabulous flower which as a bare grey plant takes many years to grow and then in a few days shoots up in a slim shaft and, as though with a bang, breaks into a magnificent tower of flowers, so it seemed to be with Ditha. Since the two flowers of her head had opened, a quite different Spring burst into flower all around her with lightning speed; but it was not only the outer world that was given her, her soul too began to grow.[248]

This evocative passage opens up several possibilities for the text. In terms of the way that it connects back to the chain of flowers, Ditha's transition is away from the undifferentiated relation to nature that she had had prior to being able to see, and more towards the specifically human way of relating to the chain of flowers, where she is now both part of the chain and capable of studying it from the perspective of the researcher, as the comparison of her body to flowers makes clear.[249] Finally, and perhaps above all, this passage links Ditha's acquisition of sight to her oncoming pubescence. The natural imagery of flowers and shafts bursting forth has a strongly sexual resonance, particularly given that we also know that Ditha is at this point eleven years old.

Reality for Stifter shines through in individual particular things that can be individually studied, but Ditha gains sight without immediately comprehending the difference between the things in her environment or between herself and the environment.

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[247] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 326-327.

[248] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 84.

[249] As Torsten Pettersson points out, the chain of flowers metaphor suggests a two fold way in which humans relate to the universe. “Firstly, man is part of the chain because one of the flowers or links in it has been placed in his head. This apparently refers to man as an active being who guided by reason reacts to existing conditions (earlier parts of the chain), and by his actions and their consequences produces further links in the chain. Secondly, from „das Auge der Seele“ onwards the narrator describes man's reflective nature, which allows him to follow the workings of the chain link by link to its originator. . . .” Torsten Pettersson, “„Eine Welt aus Sehen und Blindheit“: Consciousness and World in Stifter’s „Abdias“,” *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 40, no. 1 (1990): 42.

> Er zeigte ihr hier den Himmel, das unendliche tiefe Blau, in dem die silbernen Länder, die Wolken, schwammen, und sagte ihr, das sei blau, das weiß. Dann zeigt er auf die Erde, wie die sanfte, weiche Wiege des Thales so von ihnen hinaus ging, und sagte, das sei das Land, auf dem sie wandeln, das Weiche unter ihren Füßen sei das grüne Gras, das Blendende, einschneidender sei, als gestern die Lampe, sei die Sonne, die Lampe des Tages, die nach dem Schlummer immer komme, den Tag mache und den Augen Kraft gebe, alles sehen zu können.[250]
>
> He showed her the sky, the endless deep blue in which the silver islands of the clouds were floating and told her that was blue, that white. Then he pointed to the earth, where the soft gentle hollow of the valley stretched out in front of them and told her that was the ground on which they were walking, the soft substance under their feet was green grass, the dazzling thing that her eyes could not bear and that was more penetrating than the lamp had been yesterday was the sun, the lamp of the day, which always came after sleep, making the day and giving the eyes the power to see everything.[251]

But the program is caught again in the motif of veiling and revelation that runs through *Abdias.*[252] Ditha is able to see the valley for the very first time, but the light of the sun, to which her eyes are suddenly sensitive, is so bright as to impair sight. As Abdias leads her through the valley it also turns out that she is unable not only to identify discrete things, but she becomes especially confused "wenn Farben und Klänge zugleich sich in ihrem Haupte drängten" ("especially when colours and sounds crowded together in her head"),[253] and she speaks of "violetten Klängen" ("violet sounds").[254] Ditha's synaesthesia resists both the mode of seeing that her father attempts to train her in while preserving her previsual way of being in her world. Timothy Morton has argued for the productivity of synaesthesia in a broader process of "dissolving the subject-object dualism upon which depend both aestheticiation and the domination of nature."[255] Drawing on Walter Bejamin's notion of *Zerstreuung*, Morton argues that, "The synesthetic manifold makes it

[250] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 325.
[251] Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 83.
[252] See Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen*, 58.
[253] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 325. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 83.
[254] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 330. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 86.
[255] Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 162.

impossible to achieve the distance necessary to objectify and aestheticize the object. Far from generating the smoothness of the Wagnerian total work of art, where music, theater, and other media are fused together to create a compelling phantasmagorical sheen, synesthesia makes clear that experience is fragmented and inconsistent."[256] Hence the narrator's statement about Ditha's life, "So lebte sie einer Welt aus sehen und Blindheit, und so war ja auch das Blau ihrer Augen, so wie das unsers Himmels, aus Licht und Nacht gewoben" ("So she lived [of] a world made of sight and blindness, [and so was] the blue of her eyes which, like that of our sky, [. . .] woven out of light and night").[257] The genitive points to the immediacy of her experience – she lives *of* a world, as opposed to "in" a world – and so it is problematic to even speak of an environment in relation to Ditha, as the "environ" of "environment" means a surrounding that can only be conceptualized if we presume a dualism that she does not seem to experience, in spite of her father's best efforts. Her blue eye further distorts any differentiation between herself and the object-world, as it is another feature of her person that she has in common with the world of the valley, here with the sky, later in the narrative with the field of blue flax flowers. Her incomplete initiation into the objectifying gaze means that she continues to embody a kind of immanence opposed to both the mutual alienation of man and nature and to the ambiguous, dubious relation of *cultura agri* and *cultura animi*.

The problem is that the utopian immanence that Ditha embodies turns out to be unsustainable, especially within the framework of the realist text. Her immanence, as Stifter tells us explicitly, is determined by sight *and* blindness. She can be in and of the world in a utopian, perhaps even ecological manner, but that circumstance does not dispense with the problem of

[256] Ibid., 165.
[257] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 330. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 87, translation modified.

knowing the world that is central to *Abdias* and Stifter's realism more generally. The paradox is this: an understanding of reality is necessarily predicated on a detachment from one's object-world as we see in the figure of Abdias and later in the researcher in the preface to *Bunte Steine*. But this detachment becomes an unbridgeable epistemological gap. The problem is now no longer that knowledge is infinite, and finite human minds can only know the infinite through the small, as is the case in the preface to *Bunte Steine*. Instead the problem is that the reality we wish to study always retreats from us when we assume the position of the researcher in the preface. It is the only position open to us, given the blindness that characterizes Ditha's immanence, but it is also offered to us in the knowledge that it, too, is not a particularly viable starting point for knowing reality.

Ditha's immanence with nature is further discredited as a model for relating to the universe inasmuch as it is ultimately the cause of her own destruction. Abdias finds her in the flax field with the intention of returning her to the house where the lightning rod Abdias has put up will protect her from another strike. But where Abdias rightly sees approaching danger from nature, Ditha is possessed by joy at the oncoming storm. Her death occurs at a moment when her thinking about nature begins to change. The bolt of lightning that strikes her dead occurs in the middle of a speech on her flax field, which is now no longer a point of identification, but instead appears to her in terms of its use-value for humans. She tells her father of how the flax plant "ist ein Freund des Menschen" ("it is man's friend")[258] for providing the raw materials for cloth that serve human needs from birth to the grave. The servant Sara told her all of this, she says, but she did not comprehend "da noch das traurige schwarze Tuch in meinem Haupte war" ("when the

[258] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 340. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 93.

sad black cloth was still in my head").[259] The black cloth in the head is the opposite of reason, that most beautiful flower in the chain of flowers that is also thrown into the heads of humans, and furthermore Ditha says that through observation she now understands everything she heard about in her years of blindness. The monologue she delivers immediately before dying drifts from the flax to the servant Sara, but in it we see a sense of specific natural things as having concrete use values, in opposition to her prior mode of being not *in* the world but living *of* a world. In short, immediately prior to her death Ditha begins to take on the mantel of one of Stifter's cultivating types, holding a monologue on cultivation and the uses to which nature can be put in meeting human needs.

This change in her character is promptly cut short by her death in a second lightning strike. This time, the natural catastrophe returns her to an elemental unity with nature; after her burial the narrator tells us that "aus Dithas Gliedern sproßten Blumen und Gras" ("out of Ditha's body grew flowers and grass").[260] Abdias sinks into a period of insanity and dies thirty years after Ditha. The novella ends with the valley prospering in the hands of the descendants of the friend who originally arranged the purchase of the valley for Abdias. The death of Abdias and the passing of the valley into Austrian hands is problematically the key condition for the valley to realize the ideal of cultivation that we see in *Brigitta* and *Der Nachsommer.* The generational continuity realizes the model of the reality proposed in the chain of flowers model of the universe, with a continuous line of generational descent advancing the project of cultivating the valley. But it is an ideal that is only realized at the expense of both Abdias and Ditha, to discount this fact by looking towards generational continuity as a sign that both had their place in an ideal

[259] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 339. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 93.
[260] Stifter, HKG, 1,5 : 341. Stifter, *Brigitta: With Abdias, Limestone, and The Forest Path*, 94.

set of human relations is to take Stifter's realist program at face value.[261] In a sense, this looks like the bad faith of realism, with *Abdias* running incongruent to a theoretical program that will culminate in the preface to *Bunte Steine*. But the images of being in the object-world and of the object-world hold open all possibilities, containing at once the program of making the poetic ideal visible while also being a vehicle for irony and skepticism.

[261] That Abdias' and Ditha's ends are, in fact, harmonious is the argument that Johann Lachinger makes. See note 215. And if we account for the ending as an example of the capriciousness of nature whose meaning we cannot penetrate, as E.F. George suggests, then we are forced again to simply have faith that there is a meaning that may escape us. E.F. George, "The Place of *Abdia*s in Stifter's Thought and Work," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 3, no. 2 (1967): 150–151.

CHAPTER 2

The Styx Flows through Arcadia: Environmental Depredation and Aesthetic Reflection in Wilhelm Raabe's *Pfisters Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*

In the winter of 1890 to 1891 the city of Braunschweig experienced a precipitous decline in the quality of its drinking water. The cause: the beet sugar factories in the surrounding duchy were releasing hydrogen sulfide, the major byproduct of beet sugar production, into the Oker River watershed in quantities that exceeded the capacity of local water purification facilities. Wilhelm Raabe described the scene in the city in a letter to his daughter on January 17, 1891.

> Sei Du froh, daß Du nicht in Braunschweig bist. Der reine Schweinestall! Wir waschen uns nicht mehr, wir putzen uns nicht mehr die Zähne, selbst durch das gekochte Essen schmeckt man das durch zwölf Zuckerfabriken versaute Okerwasser: Pfisters Mühle in fürchterlichster Vollendung!
>
> Be glad that you are not in Braunschweig. An absolute pigsty! We no longer bathe, we no longer brush our teeth, even in our cooked food you can taste the water from the Oker, spoiled by twelve sugar factories: Pfister's Mill in its most terrible completion![262]

The letter describes the intrusion of a byproduct of modern industry into a city that Raabe had once praised for the "uralte Pracht und Schönheit der niedersächsischen Bürgerherrlichkeit" ("ancient magnificence and beauty of lower Saxon bourgeois splendor")[263] of its medieval old town. Raabe describes an aesthetic crisis as precipitating a civilizational crisis: quotidian habits of hygiene and consumption are suddenly disrupted as the ugly signs of modern industry move from the duchy's peripheral industrial settlements into the beautiful, pre-industrial urban core. If Raabe's 1884 novel *Pfisters Mühle* (*Pfister's Mill*), which happens to be about water pollution

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[262] Wilhelm Raabe, "Letter to Margarethe Raabe," January 17, 1891, Nachlass Wilhelm Raabe, Schriftsteller (1831-1910). H III 10 : 2, Stadtarchiv Braunschweig. The letter is as yet unpublished, but is excerpted in Horst Denkler, "Die Antwort literarischer Phantasie auf eine der »größeren Fragen der Zeit«: Zu Wilhelm Raabes »Sommerferienheft« Pfisters Mühle," in *Neues über Wilhelm Raabe: Zehn Annährungsversuche an einen verkannten Schriftsteller* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988), 101.

[263] Wilhelm Raabe, "Der Altstadtmarkt zu Braunschweig," *Freya. Illustrirte Blätter für die gebildete Welt* 6 (1866): 149.

from a beet sugar factory, is "completed" in the calamity of 1891, then it is because what appeared in the novel as the individual tragedy of a miller driven out of business by industrial pollution has now become a large scale communal disaster.

Environmental depredation becomes a poetological problem in Raabe's novels *Pfisters Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* (*The Birdsong Papers*, 1896) because the dirty (by)products of industrial capitalism stick to the poetic project much as they stick to the beauty of old town Braunschweig. Anthropologist Mary Douglas suggests that if we regard dirt not in the context of hygiene or pathogenicity, as Raabe does in the letter to his daughter, then we can start to see dirt – and pollution more generally – as "matter out of place." Dirt for Douglas implies a system, it "is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements."[264] In this chapter I will argue that the dirty products of industrial modernity seep from the material world into the process of poesis, a process explicitly thematized in the figures of the first person narrators in both novels. To play on the word *Verklärung*, I show how the muddy, the unclear, the leftover *Trübe* is produced within and sticks to Raabe's realism, generating the text's level of critical self-reflection and its critique of German society after unification. Industrial capitalist production does not only produce dirt in the form of elements that disrupt the aesthetic experience of a given space, such as happened during the 1890/91 Braunschweig water calamity, but under its sign humans order nature so that categories of "dirt" and "pollution" become both possible and meaningful. Ebert Pfister and Karl Krumhardt, the first person narrators of *Pfisters Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* respectively, are both committed to mimetic representation: the "*Sommerferienheft*" ("Summer

[264] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1992), 36.

Vacation Notebook") of the former and the "*Akten*" ("files" or "papers") of the latter both imply a claim to a documentary, non-fictional realism. At the same time both narrators nostalgically locate the conditions of possibility for poesy in idyllic spaces that they presume exist outside of the ecosocial conditions of industrial modernity, that is, they seek the poetic within what Friedrich Theodor Vischer famously calls the "*grüne Stellen*" ("green places").[265] The persistence of dirt and the dirty within the poetic project does not negate the realist project by exposing it as impossibly contradictory. Instead both the poetological reflection and the critique of industrial modernity are a result of the text being caught between the counterforces of the material reality of environmental depredation and the poetic realist imperative to render base material artistically.

A moment from *Pfisters Mühle* illustrates this poetic bind: Adam Asche, the industrialist sympathetic to the cause of the Pfister mill, reminds Ebert that the Styx flowed through Arcadia, and that in the nineteenth century anyone with a garden or a mill on the water "auf macherlei Überraschungen gefaßt sein muß" ("must be prepared for certain surprises").[266] It is an apt image for the tension between the material and a poetic project invested in elevating that material to art, thereby transcending its materiality. Asche's statement refers to the real-existing region of Arcadia, where there is a river that is sometimes identified with the river of the underworld, but also to Arcadia as a bucolic poetic landscape. He invokes the pastoral image that the narrator of Stifter's *Brigitta* celebrates in Murai, but he connects it not to an ideal future condition but the reality of ecological degradation in the present. His statement is a humorous reformulation of Nicolas Poussin's allegorical painting "Et in Arcadia Ego," in which shepherds contemplate a tomb. As one of the figures traces the inscription meaning "I, too, am in Arcadia," the shadow of

[265] See Vischer, *Aesthetik, oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*, 1,303 – 1,307.
[266] Wilhelm Raabe, *Sämtlich Werke* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht, 1965ff), 16 : 64.

his arm creates the silhouette of a sickle. The point of the painting is not simply that death is also present in a bucolic idyll, but that an idyll is unthinkable without its opposite, without that which it would appear to cast off, and so death becomes a constitutive part of the of the harmonious bucolic order. In Asche's image, it is not death, but the foul, the ugly, and the poisonous that is a constitutive element of nineteenth century social nature, and therefore of any project such as that of Ebert and Karl.

The penetration and persistence of "matter out of place" also changes the character of the environmental thematic present in Raabe's texts. Ebert and Karl, both of whom speak openly of their commitments to urban modernity as members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, locate the conditions of possibility for poesy in places prior to their transformations through urban and industrial sprawl. The self-assertion of dirt, pollution, and the material world generally both keeps the texts connected to the object-worlds they represent while keeping the stakes of the environmental thematic at a level more urgent than regret. And in texts that imagine nature reified and relegated to a place beyond Ebert and Karl's quotidian urban existence, the persistence of dirt within the poetic project is also, surprisingly, the moment where the texts point to a way of imagining nature beyond its compartmentalization, both spatially, as something outside the city limits, or temporally, as something that was here but vanished once the factories and apartment blocks went up. Raabe's realism, and the texts' reflection on realism, I will show, are governed by the tension over what the representation of modernity and its (by)products introduces into the realist text. Heather Sullivan observes that, "Dirty nature is always with us as part of ongoing interactions among all kinds of material agents, and thus is, in other words, more process than place."[267] The dirt of industrial modernity works both inside the texts' realism and in

[267] Heather Sullivan, "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," *ISLE* 19, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 515.

the material worlds they represent. They therefore move against the compartmentalization of nature that becomes particularly acute in *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*, a dichotomy that many strands of environmentalism share with the forces behind ecological degradation. To further quote Sullivan, "When 'green thinking' neglects the less glamorous and less colorful components of dirt in both the built environment and other landscapes, it risks contributing to the dichotomy dividing our material surroundings into a place of 'pure, clean nature' and the dirty human sphere."[268] What makes Wilhelm Raabe of interest from an ecocritical standpoint, then, is not simply that he is a historical author whose works express concern over the environmental transformations taking place around him, but that he is useful for an approach that seeks to "consciously construct a symbolic place in ecocriticism for dirt and pollution, an alias or icon that allows us to give dirt its due."[269]

Where Have All the Pictures Gone?: Pfisters Mühle

Industrial pollution is central to the story Wilhelm Raabe's tells in his novel *Pfisters Mühle*, and its basic plot explains why Raabe would have seen the water calamity of 1890/91 as "completing" the text of 1884. The narrator, Ebert Pfister, describes in his ironically named "*Sommerferienheft*" ("summer vacation notebook") how effluent from the beet sugar factory Krickerode causes a foul smell that drives customers away from the tavern operated out of the mill, brings the turbines to a halt, and spurs the growth of microorganisms that suffocate all other life in the stream. The fish, we are told, register "ihr Mißbehagen an der Veränderung ihrer

[268] Ibid.
[269] Anthony Lioi, "Of Swamp Dragons: Mud, Megalopolis, and a Future for Ecocriticism," in *Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 17.

Lebensbedingungen" ("their unhappiness with the change in their living conditions") by floating on their backs downstream, while the people were "auch in dieser Beziehung auf ihre eigenen Bemerkungen angewiesen" ("also left to their own observations in this matter").[270] Ebert's father Bertram decides to seek legal restitution for the lost business, first enlisting a family friend with the speaking name Adam Asche to gather scientific evidence against Krickerode. Asche at this time happens to be engaged in putting his own doctorate in natural sciences to use towards the development of a process for industrial laundry cleaning – a process that ironically produces clean clothes but dirty air and water.[271] With Asche's help Bertram wins his suit against Krickerode,[272] but the court victory does not save the mill from insolvency, and so he shuts it down, after which he falls ill and dies. The novel was inspired by an actual lawsuit brought byDeutsche Viertelsjahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte the mills at Bienrode and Wenden against the beet sugar factory at Rautheim, places that have since been incorporated into the city of Braunschweig. The suit was one of a series of historical *Wasserprozesse* ("water trials") that took place in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century.[273] The suit brought by the mills at Bienrode and Wenden concerned the losses incurred from Rautheim dumping hydrogen sulfide into the Wabe. The Wabe is the stream that flows near the tavern *Zum grünen Jäger*, where Raabe's *Stammtisch*, the *Kleiderseller*, used to meet, and the author saw first-hand the impact of hydrogen sulfide on the stream's ecosystem, scenes that

[270] Raabe, BA, 16 : 52–53. The scene is a moment of what Fritz Martini calls the "Entpathetisierung" that is a core element of Raabe's humor. See Martini, *Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus, 1848-1898*, 678.

[271] Asche has affinities to Johan Julius Spindler (1810-1873). Like Spindler, Asche also opens an industrial cleaning facility on the banks of the Spree in what is now Berlin-Köpenick.

[272] See "Zur Entstehung" in Raabe, BA, 16 : 517–519.

[273] For an example of such a trial and the issues and interests at stake, see Günter Bayerl and Ulrich Troitzsch, eds., "Der „Wasserprozeß" gegen Hoffmanns Stärkefabriken (1890)," in *Quellentexte zur Geschichte der Umwelt von der Antike bis heute* (Göttingen: Muster-Schmidt Verlag, 1998), 356–59.

inspired some of the descriptions of environmental depredation in *Pfisters Mühle*.[274]

The story the novel tells makes it tempting to regard *Pfisters Mühle* as having an especially strong proto-ecological consciousness,[275] and it is part of the reason why this text in particular has prompted environmentally oriented analyses long before the term "ecocriticism" had been coined. Much of the body of environmentally oriented analyses of the text prior to the 1980s came from the scientific community. As early as 1925 August Thienemann, noted hydrobiologist and a significant figure in the history of German environmentalism,[276] argued in a pair of essays that in spite of the poetic transfiguration, the novel is faithful enough to the biological understanding of wastewater biology that it can be regarded as a chapter in the history of the field.[277] Bacteriologist Ludwig Popp published an essay in 1959 arguing that the novel was

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[274] Braunschweig had opened water filtration facilities in 1865. By the 1880s Rautheim alone was producing 30 to 40 cubic meters of waste water for every single beet processed for sugar, and with 25,000 tons of beets processed there in one season, the factory was releasing between 750,000 and one million cubic meters of waste water, far exceeding the capacity of the factory's disposal field. It was around this time that the residents of Braunschweig first began noticing a decline in the quality of their drinking water corresponding with the peak of beet sugar production between the months of September and February. The decline was a recurring problem until the opening of new water purification facilities in 1895. See Rudolf Blasius and Heinrich Beckurts, "Verunreinigung und Reinigung der Flüsse nach Untersuchungen des Wassers der Oker," *Deutsche Viertelsjahrschrift für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege* 27, no. 2 (1895): 335–336. and Christian Behrens, *Die Wassergesetzgebung im Herzogtum Braunschweig nach Bauernbefreiung und industrieller Revolution: Zur Genese des Wasserrechts im bürgerlichen Rechtsstaat*, 2009, 85–89.

[275] Ecological catastrophe, Thomas Sporn writes, "hat Wilhelm Raabe bereits deutlich erkannt und als Menetekel in der ihm eigenen Art ebenso deutlich niedergeschrieben. Sein Werk enthält nämlich eine Fülle kürzerer oder längerer Passagen, die – insgesamt betrachtet – gründsätzlich alle Anklagepunkte des modernen ökologischen Protestes artikulieren, so daß die erst heute allgemein bewußt und politisch sogar brisant gewordenen Forderungen in Sachen Umweltschutz durch Wilhelm Raabe geradezu klassisch und künstlerisch sublim begründet werden können." Thomas Sporn, "Wilhelm Raabe: Ökologisch?," *Diskussion Deutsch* 12, no. 57 (1981): 56. Charlotte Jolles also sees the environmental concern in Raabe as being a key difference between his picture of German society and that of Theodor Fontane. She writes in an article comparing the two (an article I find, incidentally, somewhat too unsympathetic towards Raabe), "Waren für Raabe die Umweltveränderungen von einer Tragweite, die ihn skeptisch gegenüber der technischen Entwicklung werden ließ, so waren es die veralteten gesellschaftlichen Strukturen, mit denen Fontanes Romane sich auseinandersetzen und implizit, wenn nicht explizit, auf Veränderung drängten." Charlotte Jolles, "Weltstadt - Verlorene Nachbarschaft: Berlin-Bilder Raabes und Fontanes," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1988, 67.

[276] See Thomas Kluge and Engelbert Schramm, *Wassernöte: Umwelt- und Sozialgeschichte des Trinkwassers* (Aachen: Alano, 1986), 169–172, and Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*, 232.

[277] Thienemann made important philological discoveries on the relation between the novel and historical science, such as the fact that Raabe borrowed material from the biologist Ferdinand Cohn, who lives in the novel as Asche's "Kollege Kühn," and Heincrich Beckurts, whose materials Raabe followed so closely that the novel even

a roman à clef for the water trial against Rautheim, adding information on the subsequent history of Braunschweig's water supply, and in an essay from 1985 chemist Elisabeth Vaupel connected the novel to historical realities of pollution from beet sugar production in the Duchy of Braunschweig.[278] Conversely, literary critics up until the 1970s tended to subordinate the novel's engagement with Braunschweig's historical environmental problems to its portrait of the *conditio humana* in the wake of the political and economic changes in the years after German unification. Wilhelm Fehse's deeply ideologically coerced 1937 biography of Raabe, for instance, cast the environmental aspect as part of a conservative resistance to a crass, high capitalist ethos of progress that has no room for individuals who cling to older social forms.[279] Hermann Pongs also argues that the novel assumes a conservative, anti-technological stance,[280] while Barker Fairley finds the relevance of the pollution problem to be only a part of the novel's overall interest in

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reproduces some of Beckurts' spelling mistakes. See August Thienemann, "Wilhelm Raabe und die Abwasserbiologie," *Mitteilungen für die Gesellschaft der Freunde Wilhelm Raabes* 15 (1925): 124–131 and "»Pfisters Mühle«. Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte der biologischen Wasseranalyse," *Verhandlungen des Naturhistorischen Vereins der preußischen Rheinlande und Westfalens* 82 (1925): 315–329. See also Raabe, BA, 16 : 518–519.

[278] See Ludwig Popp, "»Pfisters Mühle«. Schlüsselroman zu einem Abwasserprozeß," *Städtehygiene*, no. 2 (1959): 21–25 and Elisabeth Vaupel, "Gewässerverschmutzung im Spiegel der schönen Literatur," *Chemie in unserer Zeit* 19 (1985): 77–85.

[279] This conservative resistance for Fehse is embodied in the figure of the poet Lippoldes. "Er behauptet selbst „res mea agitur" in Hinblick auf Vater Pfisters vergifteten Lebensquell, das heißt, er sieht in Krickerode das Sinnbild einer Lebensmacht, an der er mit seinem Dichten schuldlos habe scheitern müssen. Diese Macht ist der Zeitgeist mit all den Blüten, die er treibt, der Geist einer geschäftigen Gründerzeit, die stolz auf ihren Fortschritt und ihren wirtschaftlichen Aufschwung achtlos über Vergangenes hinwegschreitet und wenig Sinn für seelische Werte hat." Wilhelm Fehse, *Wilhelm Raabe: Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Braunschweig: Vieweg Verlag, 1937), 494. Fehse's claim about *Pfisters Mühle* is deeply ideologically coerced; the biography is saturated with National Socialist rhetoric on nation and race. On this point see also Jeffrey Sammons, *The Shifting Fortunes of Wilhelm Raabe: A History of Criticism as a Cautionary Tale* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1992), 40–43.The Stadtarchiv Braunschweig contains letters from Fehse's fellow P.O.W.s in the Soviet camp at Torgau reporting that before his death of flu, Fehse wished to publish a new edition of the book with significant cuts and revisions, presumably with the intention of painting a portrait of the author less obviously in the service of National Socialist cultural politics. See Hippe, "Letter to Käthe Fehse," November 19, 1948, G IX 32 : 36 # 14, Stadtarchiv Braunschweig.

[280] Pongs characterizes *Pfisters Mühle* as, "Eine Tragödie, die an innerem Gewicht nichts verliert, dadurch, daß es sich nicht um eine Ausartung menschlicher Bosheit handelt, sondern um die Entwicklung der chemischen Wissenschaft im technischen Zeitalter. Raabe rührt hier vielmehr an den wundesten Punkt der Zivilisation, daß menschliche Technik und menschlicher Fortschrittsgeist die gewachsenen Zusammenhänge der Schöpfung zerstört." Hermann Pongs, *Wilhelm Raabe: Leben und Werk* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1958), 492–493.

how one adapts to a changing world.[281] This line of argumentation reads Raabe as an author who responds to historical processes of industrialization and urbanization by turning inwards. It is the same argument made much less sympathetically by Georg Lukács' in his essay on Raabe and Erich Auerbach on German realism more generally.[282]

The critical dismissal of the scientific register and the environmental thematic in the novel began to change in the late 1970s, however, leading to an ecocritical debate *avant la lettre* in Raabe scholarship.[283] On the one side, Horst Denkler made the case not only that there was a particular environmental concern in the representation of industrialization in *Pfisters Mühle*, but that this environmental concern lends the novel a particular contemporary relevance.[284] On the other side, the relevance argument was sharply criticized by Jeffrey Sammons on the grounds that it removes the text from its historical context and frames it too much in terms of the critics' historical moment, and so while the relevance issue may be interesting, it does not make for good critical practice.[285] Sammons furthermore expresses skepticism over whether the plot really does

[281] Barker Fairley, *Wilhelm Raabe: An Introduction to His Novels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 43.

[282] For Auerbach the political situation in nineteenth century Germany results in a failure on the part of German realists to produce an "ernste Darstellung der zeitgenössischen alltäglichen gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit auf dem Grunde der ständigen geschichtlichen Bewegung." Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern: A. Francke Verlag, 1946), 460. And Lukács writes, "Raabe sieht den ökonomischen Prozeß der Kapitalisierung Deutschlands nur in seinen äußerlichen Symptomen: hauptsächlich die Zerstörung der alten Städte, der alten Landschaften, die Proletarisierung, die Auswanderung, das Ersetzen der alten persönlichen Beziehungen zwischen den Menschen durch die fetischisierten, unmenschlichen, auf nackte Ausbeutung und Beherrschung ausgehenden Formen des Kapitalismus." Georg Lukács, "Wilhelm Raabe," in *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1953), 239. More recently, John Walker has argued for the critical aspect of Raabe's representation of interiority, writing that "Raabe's realism represents a literary critique, which draws on key features of the *Bildungsroman* genre, of the idea and culture of inwardness which had its greatest influence in German society in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century." John Walker, *The Truth of Realism: A Reassessment of the German Novel 1830-1900* (London: Legenda, 2011), 90.

[283] An earlier valuation of the environmental thematic in *Pfisters Mühle* is made by M. Beda Rauch in her dissertation on Raabe. In her analysis of *Pfisters Mühle* she argues that science and poetry are two diverging forms of consciousness in the novel's portrait of the industrial era, with poetry at the end reduced to the status of relic. M. Beda Rauch, *Philologie und philologische Anspielung im Werk Wilhelm Raabes*, 1971, 182–183.

[284] Denkler, "Die Antwort literarischer Phantasie auf eine der »größeren Fragen der Zeit«," 86–87.The argument for reading *Pfisters Mühle* for its relevance was also put forward by Thomas Sporn in the pedagogical journal *Diskussion Deutsch*. Sporn sees the relevance of the novel as a means of generating enthusiasm for the text amongst students in the German classroom. See Sporn, "Wilhelm Raabe: Ökologisch?," 56–57.

[285] Jeffrey Sammons, *Wilhelm Raabe: The Fiction of the Alternative Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

make the novel "ecological." Instead he argues that pollution is more of an aesthetic matter for Raabe rather than an existential one.

> In general . . . the stress is on the assault upon the senses of sight and smell. That the pollution is dangerous to health and life, and, for that matter, ultimately to the overall economic welfare, does not seem to have been in Raabe's mind, and I do not think that he knew it. . . . Strictly speaking, there is no question of ecology, that is, of balance in nature and man's balance with nature. What we have is an offense, but not a threat in the dimensions that enlightened people perceive today.[286]

In my view Sammons is correct to point out the problems of reading a historical text through the lens of a contemporary notion of ecology with its connotations of "balance" in the earth's systems.[287] However, while the limited definition of ecology is necessary for Sammons' argument, it is not the only way in which a text can imagine environmental issues.[288] Nor can we draw easy distinctions between the existential stakes of stresses on the material environment and aesthetics: science can measure the changes in an environment, it can identify harmful agents, but the terms we use to grasp environmental depredation as a problem, terms such as "natural," "degraded," and "out of balance," are themselves all aesthetic judgments.[289]

The existential and aesthetic stakes of pollution intersect in the novel when Ebert first

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University Press, 1987), 269, 282.

[286] Ibid., 280–281.

[287] Although Ernst Haeckel had coined the term *Oekologie* in 1866, it accrued its harmonious connotations later. Dana Phillips regards the notion of "harmony" as a platitude that has seeped into much ecocriticism, and has offered a book-length critique of this kind of reading in *The Truth of Ecology*. For a discussion of the trouble with the harmony concept in scientific and popular thinking about ecology, see especially Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology*, 42–82.

[288] Aside from the studies of *Pfisters Mühle* I have already mentioned, important studies of the environmental thematic in *Pfisters Mühle* that appeared at this time were Hermann Helmers, "Raabe als Kritiker von Umweltzerstörung. Das Gedicht »Einst kommt die Stunde« in der Novelle »Pfisters Mühle«," *Literatur für Leser* 87, no. 3 (1987): 199–211, and Heinrich Detering, "Ökologische Krise und ästhetische Innovation im Werk Wilhelm Raabes," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1992, 1–27.

[289] A considerable body of literature exists investigating the relation between aesthetics and contemporary environmental politics. See among others Glenn Parsons, *Aesthetics and Nature* (London ; New York: Continuum International Pub, 2008), esp. 49–65 and 95–113,. Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), esp. 6–28, and Alison Byerly, "The Uses of Landscape: The Picturesque Aesthetic and the National Park System," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 52–68.

sees the condition of the mill stream during the height of the beet sugar "campaign." Hydrogen sulfide is only present in the fall and winter months after the beet harvest,[290] but even while it is only intermittently present, the inevitability of the pollution leaves the creek permanently marked. Krickerode, for its part, does not only produce nature because its byproducts happen to change the qualities of the stream, but because the production process within the factory walls determines the annual cycle of the stream. The hydrogen sulfide that the factory releases spurs the growth of microorganisms that render the water eutrophic, killing off the fish.

> Erfreulich war's nicht anzusehen. Aus dem lebendigen, klaren Fluß, der wie der Inbegriff alles Frischen und Reinlichen durch meine Kinder- und ersten Jugendjahre rauschte und murmelte, war ein träge schleichendes, schleimiges, weißbläuliches Etwas geworden, das wahrhaftig niemand mehr als Bild des Lebens und des Reinen dienen konnte.
>
> It was not cheerful to behold. From the lively, clear river that, like the epitome of all that was fresh and pure, had whispered and murmered throughout the years of my childhood and youth, there was now a sluggishly creeping, slimy, white-blue something, that now served absolutely nobody as an image of life and purity.[291]

Environmental crisis here is also an aesthetic crisis. First, Krickerode's wastewater has robbed the creek of its defining visual and aural qualities, transforming it into something both formless and patently ugly. Instead of an identifiable natural thing, we have a "something," an abominable combination of nature and industrial waste. The ugliness of the polluted creek has cost it its use-value as a source of power for the milling side of his father's business and as a pleasant feature of the mill's environs that attracted guests to the beer garden. But Ebert invests in it a symbolic significance that exceeds either of these functions. The creek no longer "serves" not just him, but anybody as an image of "fresh" and "pure" nature. The framework for Ebert's reaction is the

[290] See Blasius and Beckurts, "Verunreinigung und Reinigung der Flüsse nach Untersuchungen des Wassers der Oker," 337–346. The fact that beet sugar pollution was a seasonal affair is the reason why Ebert describes the smell as "ein Herbst- und Wintergeruch." Raabe, BA, 16 : 52.

[291] Raabe, BA, 16 : 53.

"mythography of betrayed Edens" that forms the "toxic discourse" that Lawrence Buell sees at work in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* or in the media coverage of Love Canal.[292] It involves "an awakening to the horrified realization that there is no protective environmental blanket, leaving one to feel dreadfully wronged."[293] Hydrogen sulfide as "matter out of place" has ruptured the idyll of the mill, but there are also a few realities that cut against the grain of Ebert's symbolic overdetermination of the stream. First is that pollution in this instance is not a straightforward question of toxicity, but of a product of human production conspiring with natural processes to fracture Ebert's concept of a fresh and pure nature. The suffocated fish play into the death imagery of the Styx that Asche will evoke later in the novel, but by the same token the microorganisms mean that the problem with the stream is not that it is an image of death as opposed to life, but instead the problem is one of *too much life*. It is the slimy, impure, ugly nature that disrupts the harmonious functioning of the stream and the ecosocial sphere around the mill. When Asche identifies the presence of the bacteria *beggiatoa alba* in the water he characterizes what is taking place in the stream in Darwinian terms, reminding Bertram that "Pilze wollen auch leben, und das Lebende hat Recht oder nimmt es sich" ("fungi also want to live, and living things have the right to live, or else they claim it").[294]

Environmental depredation as aesthetic crisis here, as in the later *Akten des Vogelsangs*, is thematized through the figure of the first person narrator, Ebert. His reaction to the stream in its degraded state is partly a matter of childhood nostalgia, partly a desire for an intact nature that appears to be radically other to his urban life in Berlin (he is, after all, on vacation in the narrative present). Ebert's dismay may be a matter of sensory offense, and therefore

[292] See Lawrence Buell's "Toxic Discourse" chapter in Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World*, 30–54.
[293] Ibid., 36.
[294] Raabe, BA, 16 : 91.

fundamentally anthropocentric, but then, the novel itself alerts us to the extent to which its entire cast of characters is compromised. “Jeder Mensch ist Partei in der Welt” (“everyone is an interested party in this world”),[295] as Ebert's father Bertram observes. Ebert, and therefore too his summer vacation notebook, exist within a web of partisan commitments in modern German society that implicate everyone in the environmental crisis the novel depicts. Ebert's allegiance to the Berliner *Bildungsbürgertum* conditions his perception of the environment throughout the novel.[296] Bertram's lawyer in the suit, who has the speaking name “Riechei” (from “riechen,” to smell) takes the case in order to garner fame for himself, all the while wondering why the Pfisters did not also invest in Krickerode.[297] The character Adam Asche (“Asche,” “ash”) is the character who speaks the most openly and the most consistently about how his commitments and those of the other character on the side of the mill render the suit quixotic. He prefaces his oath to gather scientific evidence on Bertram's behalf by characterizing himself as one, “der die feste Absicht hat, selber einen sprudelnden Quell, einen Kristallbach, einen majestätischen Fluß, kurz, irgendeinen Wasserlauf im idyllischen grünen Deutschen Reich so bald als möglich und so infam als möglich zu verunreinigen. . . .” (“who is himself determined to dirty as shamelessly as possible any bubbling spring, crystal brook, or majestic river, in short, any waterway in the idyllic green German Empire”).[298] Asche speaks here not only as one who has torn commitments, but as the ambivalent voice of science and technology. His scientific skill reveals the truth of

[295] Raabe, BA, 16 : 92.

[296] For Ebert “hat die Mühle durch die gelehrte Ausbildung, zu der ihn Vater Pfister in Vorahnung der Zukunftslosigkeit des eigenen Gewerbes bestimmt, schon früh den Charakter von „natürlichen Produktionsbedingungen als ihm gehörigen, als den seinen“ verloren. Während der Vater noch ganz im alten Familienbesitz wurzelt, ist der städtische Gymnasiast dem Erbe seiner Vorfahren, das er nur noch in den Ferien sieht, schon wesentlich entfremdet: sein Verhältnis zu ihm wird mehr und mehr ein sentimentalisches. Die Zerstörung der Mühle trifft daher den Vater als primärer Eigentumsverlus, den Sohn als Destruktion der Erinnerung oder sekundärer Eigentumsverlust.” See Peter Sprengel, “Interieur und Eigentum: Zur Soziologie bürgerlicher Subjektivität bei Wilhelm Raabe,” *Jahrbuch der Jean-Paul-Gesellschaft* 9 (1974): 154.

[297] Raabe, BA, 16 : 117.

[298] Ibid., 16 : 67.

what industry is doing to the mill and to the environment in Germany, but the ultimate purpose of that knowledge is the subjugation of nature to human industry. His comments, such as the reminder that the Styx flows through Arcadia, are an acknowledgment of both modern ecosocial reality and his culpability in creating that reality. That is why when Ebert tells him he is a good person for coming to his father's aid, he sharply denies it.[299]

The implication in environmental depredation extends to the mill itself. Bertram Pfister's court fight is, like the historical water trials,[300] a conflict between competing business interests, not a matter of nineteenth century ecojustice. Bertram's position is further compromised because as a site of mechanical production, the mill is but an embryonic form of the factory. Marx singles out water driven mills in particular as a forerunner of the modern factory in his chapters on the division of labor and on machinery in *Kapital.*[301] The compromised position of mills in environmental depredation appears as early as Raabe's 1867 novel *Abu Telfan*, where the mill is the "Schwesterchen" ("little sister") of the factories that have redirected the streams and so driven it out of business.[302] And while Krickerode may extend the production process into the environment by treating the stream as a sewer provided by nature, the mill also produces nature for economic purposes: the water wheel, the weir, and the restaurant benches are transformations of nature in their own right, and make visible the self-negating aspect that is constitutive of the idyll.[303]

The tension between the nostalgic desire for nature at the mill and the partisan commitment to industrial modernity produces Ebert as one of Raabe's reflective, "split"

[299] Ibid., 16 : 68.
[300] See Behrens, *Die Wassergesetzgebung im Herzogtum Braunschweig*, 60.
[301] Marx and Engels, *Das Kapital*, 1:368–369, 396–398.
[302] Raabe, BA, 7 : 70–71.
[303] See Wilfried Thürmer, "Die Schönheit des Vergehens: Zur Produktivität des Negativen in Wilhelm Raabes Erzählung »Pfisters Mühle« 1884," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1984, 75–77.

narrators. For Ebert, the moral absolute that pulls against the norms of bourgeois society is projected into a supposedly pristine nature.[304] Early in the novel he recalls standing atop the mill as a child and looking out at the landscape. Insofar as it serves as a baseline against which later transformations to the landscape can be measured, it is important for the plot as well, and thus worth quoting at length:

> In einer hellen, weiten, wenn auch noch grünen, so doch von Wald und Gebüsch schon ziemlich kahl gerupften Ebene war [die Mühle], neben dem Dorfe, ungefähr eine Stunde von der Stadt gelegen. Aus dem Süden kam der kleine Fluß her, dem sie ihr Dasein verdankte. Ein deutsches Mittelgebirge umzog dort den Horizont; aber das Flüßchen hatte seine Quelle bereits in der Ebene und kam nicht von den Bergen. Wiesen und Kornfelder bis in die weiteste Ferne, hier und da zwischen Obstbäumen ein Kirchturm, einzelne Dörfer überall verstreut, eine vielfach sich windende Landstraße mit Pappelbäumen eingefaßt, Feld- und Fahrwege nach allen Richtungen und dann und wann auch ein qualmender Fabrikschornstein – das war es, was man sah von meines Vaters Mühle aus, ohne daß man sich auf die Zehen zu stellen brauchte. Aber die Hauptsache in dem Bilde waren doch, und dieses besonders für mich, die Dunstwolke und die Türme im Nordosten von unserm Dörfchen. Mit der Natur steht die Landjugend auf viel zu gutem Fuße, um sich viel aus ihr zu machen und sie als etwas anderes denn als ein Selbsteverständliches zu nehmen; aber die Stadt – ja die Stadt, das ist etwas! Das ist ein Entgegenstehendes, welches auf die eine oder andere Weise überwunden werden muß und nie von seiner Geltung für das junge Gemüt etwas aufgibt.
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> [The mill] stood near the village about an hour outside the city in a vast plain that was still green, but stripped bare of forest and shrubbery. The small river, to which the mill owed its existence, came from the south. The Central Uplands rounded around the horizon; but the little river did not come from the mountains, but had its source in the plain. Meadows and wheat fields far into the distance, here and there a church steeple between the fruit trees, individual villages scattered everywhere, a winding country road hemmed in by poplars, paths in

[304] Irmgard Roebling writes of this split for Raabe that, "Konkret wird die Reflexivität des modernen Subjetivismus bei Raabe in der dauernden Suche nach Selbstvergewisserung, die sich zunehmend als Erfahrung subjektiver Gespaltenheit auf verschiedentse Weise in seinem Werk realisiert." Irmgard Roebling, *Wilhelm Raabes doppelte Buchführung: Paradigma einer Spaltung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988), 37. The absolute as counter to bourgeois contingency is explored in Hubert Ohl's essay "Der Bürger und das Unbedingte bei Wilhelm Raabe." Ohl describes a "Spannungsverhältnis" in Raabe's late fiction between the individual as a social being and "jene Instanz, die der Einzelne den Ansprüchen und Forderungen dieser Gesellschaft entgegenstellt. Das Unbedingte, so viel in seiner Erscheinungsweise auch gesellschaftlich vermittelt sein mag, meint den Anspruch einer Moralität, die die Normen der Gesellschaft transzendiert." Hubert Ohl, "Der Bürger und das Unbedingte bei Wilhelm Raabe," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1979, 7.

> every direction, and now and then a factory smokestack puffing away – that was what one saw from my father's mill, without having to stand on one's toes. But of course what was important in the picture, particularly for me, was the haze to the northeast of our village. The country youth are on too good terms with nature to care much about her or to take her as something other than a mere given, but the city – yes, the city, that is something! That is the polar opposite, which has to be dealt with in one way or another and never loses any of its force for the young mind.[305]

Most of the description evokes a cultural landscape whose sentimentality is accentuated by the fact that Ebert's memory is wrapped in the aura of childhood. But this landscape is also one that is clearly the result of accumulated generations of human modification and as such spreads before Ebert and the reader as a historical artifact.[306] There is even a suggestion of violence in this history when Ebert mentions that the plain has been "stripped bare" of its flora. In spite of the fact that there is no pretension to obscuring the ways in which human labor has transformed the landscape, we learn little of this aspect of its ongoing history. Ebert only admits of the *signs* of the labor process on the landscape. We see, for instance, fruit trees and agricultural fields, but no farm workers, a road network, but not transportation, smokestacks, but no factory workers.[307] The fact that the factory smokestacks already dotted the horizon in the past demands skepticism towards Ebert's sentimentalizing rhetoric, simply because the conditions of industrial expansion and the concomitant pollution of, in this case, the air were already in place in Ebert's childhood.

Ebert supplies a detailed description of the landscape as viewed from the mill, but he also calls attention to his own consciousness in creating the landscape. That is, he signals to us

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[305] Raabe, BA, 16 : 11.

[306] Hubert Ohl speaks of the "Verräumlichung der Zeit" in Raabe's landscapes, meaning that space is always bound in to human history in Raabe, and gains its constitutive meaning from the visible temporal levels. "Da für Raabe >Welt< immer Welt des Menschen ist, ist auch der Raum – und auch die Natur! – für ihn immer menschlicher Raum und ragt deshalb in die Geschichte hinein." Hubert Ohl, *Bild und Wirklichkeit: Studien zur Romankunst Raabes und Fontanes* (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1968), 151.

[307] This circumstance is a reflection of the general rejection of social misère in German realist theory. Raabe was also invested in a notion of realism that transcended the ugly of everyday suffering. Ibid., 10–11.

explicitly that his realist representation is not an empirical one, and that this landscape, like any landscape, is a product of subjective mediation.[308] Even as a child gazing on the landscape, Ebert was all along most attracted to the city, signaled by its smog.

If Ebert found it beautiful the scene was because he was unlike the rural youth who are so intimately familiar with nature that it does not become an object for the kind of aesthetic contemplation Ebert engages in. He intuits with the comment Theodor Adorno's observation about the historical contingency of the appreciation of natural beauty.

> Times in which nature confronts man overpoweringly allow no room for natural beauty; as is well known, agricultural occupations, in which nature as it appears is an immediate object of action, allow little appreciation for landscape. Natural beauty, purportedly ahistorical, is at its core historical; this legitimates at the same time that it relativizes the concept.[309]

Ebert has a sense of idyllic nature, then, because it is in relation to the smoggy city and the factories spreading throughout the countryside, and this is why the picture is only complete *with* the smokestacks and the smoggy city. Ebert's treatment of natural beauty is far from a naïve assumption that natural beauty is a universal or transhistorical category. For Adorno, the cultural landscape is a useful reminder of a world prior to the current state of the domination of nature, in *Pfisters Mühle* this is the social function of what Ebert nostagically calls "der Vorwelt Wunder" ("the marvels of the world that was"), as he puts it in the flight of epigonal romanticism at the opening of the novel.[310] That is why for Adorno natural beauty is legitimate in its historicity. In

[308] "„Natur" und „Landscahft sind keine empirischen Begriffe, sondern theoretische Konstrukte und als solche Träger einer Bedeutung. Ebensowenig ist uns die Natur als Landschaft in der Art eines Objekts gegeben, sondern sie entsteht erst unter den Bedingungnen einer historisch gewachsenen und stets veränderlichen Sichtweise im Kopf des Betrachters. . . . Unter diesem Primat wird die Landschaft zu einem ästhetischen Gegenstand: Sie ist das, was der Mensch in sie hineinlegt. Ihre Funktion besteht darin, daß der Mensch seine Umwelt erlebt und sich zugleich in ein ästhetisches Verhältnis zu ihr setzt, welches historisch entstanden ist und nicht auf individueller Anschauung, sondern auf kultureller Vermittlung beruht." Berbeli Wanning, *Die Fiktionalität der Natur: Studien zum Naturbegriff in Erzähltexten der Romantik und des Realismus* (Berlin: Weidler, 2005), 13–14.

[309] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 65.

[310] Raabe, BA, 16 : 8.

the cultural landscape, “Rationalization is not yet rational; the universality of mediation has yet to be transformed into living life; and this endows the traces of immediacy, however dubious and antiquated, with an element of corrective justice.”[311] Even as the landscape bears all the signs of historical violence visited upon nature, the social character of the landscape as once seen from the mill is useful in its contrast to the more advanced stages of the domination of nature. In the case of the novel this more advanced stage would be what Krickerode does to the stream and what Asche's factory is doing to the Spree river at the end of the novel.

Even if Ebert still insists on the purity and freshness of the unpolluted mill creek, as if the difference were qualitative rather than quantitative, then this insistence also needs to be understood historically. To speak again with Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory,* “So long as progress, deformed by utilitarianism, does violence to the surface of the earth, it will be impossible – in spite of all proof to the contrary – completely to counter the perception that what antedates the trend is in its backwardness better and more humane.”[312] Ebert's realism exists between the nostalgic insistence on the purity, freshness, and ultimately the poesy of the world that was, and the consciousness of the continuity of the domination of nature. These two poles constitute the reflective level of this realist text, while also admitting of the self-destructive dialectic at work in the poetic idyll that Ebert's notebooks construct. His wife Emmy, a Berlin native, may be even more keenly aware of her socio-historical conditioning.[313] Early in the novel she tells Ebert of

[311] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 64.

[312] Ibid.

[313] As an interlocutor and commentator for Ebert, often against Ebert’s will, Emmy serves an important textual role as one who ruptures the flow of memory and of illusion in the novel. See Harald Tausch, “Wasser auf Pfisters Mühle. Zu Raabes humoristischem Erinnern der Dinge,” in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Sabine Schneider and Barbara Hunfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2008), 188–189. She is, in many ways, a foil for Ebert: at nineteen she is younger than he, she is a native of Berlin and she takes a less sympathetic view of the mill and of rural life in general. Their interactions sometimes take on a thinly veiled antagonism beneath their obvious affection, made visible in the pet names they use for each other in their first conversation in the story, when Emmy addresses Ebert as “Mäuschen” and he responds by addressing her as “Mieze.” Raabe, BA, 16 : 9.

how she was sitting alone by the stream and contemplating a stork. She reports that she was struck by the relatively unmediated encounter with a wild animal, imagining the bird saying, "Siehst du, ich stehe nicht bloß im Bilderbuche und sitze im zoologischen Garten gegen eine halbe Mark Eintrittsgeld und Wochentagen, sondern-" ("You see, I don't just appear in picture books and sit in the zoo to be viewed on weekdays for half a mark's admission, but-").[314] Ebert cuts her off with an affectionate, but no less condescending taunt that prevents Emmy from arriving at one of the novel's key insights into the aesthetic appreciation of the environment, namely, the extent to which her view of the non-human environment is mediated by her cultural conditioning as a born urbanite. The realization that she is building to is that the experience of what she takes to be nature only *seems* unmediated simply because it is *less* mediated than at home in Berlin.

There is a direct line between Ebert's perception of environmental depredation and the novel's reflections on the conditions of possibility for poetic realism, and it passes through the narrative conceit of the summer vacation notebook. As a writer himself Ebert is both conscious of standing in the shadow of a vaunted artistic tradition and aware of the sheer impossibility of continuing that tradition in a world whose physical features are thoroughly instrumentalized in the pursuit of the production of value. This uncertainty over the status of art and Ebert's – and thereby the text's – relation to both received artistic tradition and the disenchanted world of the late 19th century informs the novel's opening, which, aware of his own dilettantism, Ebert calls an "unmotivierte Stilübung" ("unmotivated style exercise,").[315] Borrowing heavily from the opening of Christoph Martin Wieland's 1780 epic *Oberon*, Ebert writes:

[314] Raabe, BA, 16 : 13.

[315] Raabe, BA, 16 : 9. On Ebert as a writer see Fairley, *Wilhelm Raabe: An Introduction to His Novels*, 38–40 and Dieter Arendt, "Künstler-Figurationen im Werk Wilhelm Raabes oder »Er war überhaupt keine ausgesprochene Künstlernatur«," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1987, 65–66.

> Ach, noch einmal ein frischer Atemzug im letzten Viertel dieses neunzehnten Jahrhunderts! Noch einmal sattelt mir den Hippogryphen; - ach, wenn sie gewußt hätten, die Leute von damals, wenn sie geahnt hätten, die Leute vor hundert Jahren, wo ihre Nachkommen das „alte romantische Land“ zu suchen haben würden!
>
> Wahrlich nicht mehr in Bagdad. Nicht mehr am Hofe des Sultans von Babylon.
>
> Wer dort nicht selber gewesen ist, der kennt *das* doch viel zu genau aus Photographien, Konsularberichten, aus den Telegrammen der Kölnischen Zeitung um es dort noch zu suchen. Wir verlegen keine Wundergeschichte mehr in den Orient. Wir haben unsern Hippogryphen um die ganze Erde gejagt und sind auf ihm zum Ausgangspunkte zurückgekommen.
>
> Ah, once again a breath of fresh air in this, the last quarter of the nineteenth century! Saddle up my hippogryph once again; - oh, had they known, the people back then, had they had a sense, the people a hundred years ago, where their descendants would have to seek “the old romantic land.”
>
> Certainly no longer in Baghdad. No longer at the court of the sultan of Babylon.
>
> Whoever has not been there himself, he knows *that* all too well from photographs, xylographic copies of photographs, consular reports, the telegrams of the Cologne Journal to seek it out for himself. We no longer set stories of marvels in the orient. We have driven our hippogryph around the entire Earth and have returned on its back to our point of departure. [316]

Ebert’s dialogue with Wieland’s text raises the issues that are the subject of critical reflection in the novel. First there is the state of the material world: Ebert ironically begins his narrative about the bad smell caused by industrial effluent with a line about breathing fresh air at a historical moment when, we discover, fresh air is increasingly difficult to come by. “The old romantic land,” he later informs us, has succumbed to the trappings of modernity: the desert over which Wieland’s Oberon flew is now criss-crossed by railways and telegraph lines, Kidron’s waters power paper mills, and on the banks of the rivers that flow out of Eden one finds “noch

[316] Raabe, BA, 16 : 7. The passage Ebert is borrowing from reads as follows: “Noch einmal sattelt mir den Hippogryfen, ihr Musen, / Zum ritt ins alte romantische land! / Wie lieblich um meinen entfesselten busen / Der holde wahnsinn spielt? Wer schlang das magische band / Um meine stirne? Wer treibt von meinen augen den nebel / Der auf der Vorwelt wundern liegt?” Christoph Martin Wieland, *Werke: Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 4.

nützlichere „Etablissements“” (“more useful establishments”).[317] These real-existing places with mythical associations, in other words, have undergone a thorough disenchantment through a combination of industrial and commercial exploitation as well as technological mediation. Reproducibility in mass media does to place what Walter Benjamin argues it does to the work of art: the singularity of the place is overcome by bringing it close to the masses and thereby eroding its poetic aura.[318] The novel lays before us the ecological corollary of Benjamin's argument about the work of art,[319] so that they work as twin forces in the realist text. Both the changes visited upon the original spaces and their mediation through mechanical reproductions (and reproductions of reproductions) have resulted in a displacement of the poetic imagination that was not yet a factor for an author as relatively recent as Wieland one hundred years prior to Ebert.

The twin problems of environmental depredation and the reproducibility of place for mass media ultimately also implicate the realist text within the network of partisanship that the characters are all caught up in: the realist text, after all, not only follows the mimetic imperative but is disseminated by the very technologies that have contributed to the burying of the poetic, of the marvels of the world that was,[320] so that Ebert's poetic project is something of a rearguard against a dirty and prosaic modernity. That is why his artistic response to the “Wirbel des Übergangs der deutschen Nation aus einem Bauernvolk in einen Industriestaat” (“the whirlwind

[317] Raabe, BA, 16 : 8.
[318] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), VII.1 : 479.
[319] On the ecological corollary to Benjamin's argument about the loss of aura in the work of art, Gernot Böhme writes, “Verfall der Aura: das hieß Aufhebung der Einmaligkeit, das hieß Herauslösung aus traditionalen Bindungen und radikale Funktionalisierung zum Gebrauchs- und Tauschwert. Das kann für die Natur heißen: die Aufhebung jeder Anerkennung des Gegebenen, der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben; es kann die Vernichtung der Individualität bedeuten, und ganz sicher die radikale Vernutzung der Natur als Ware.” See Böhme, *Natürlich Natur*, 109.
[320] This for Lillian Furst is a significant part of the origin of the seemingly self-defeating image that realism presents of itself. Furst, *All Is True*, 6–7.

of the German nation's transition from a farming people into an industrial state")[321] is a self-conscious embrace of historical repetition. We breathe a breath of fresh air *again*, in spite of the fact that the novel's conflict proceeds from the stench of polluted nature. We saddle up the hippogryph *again,* now for an imaginary repetition of *Oberon.* This may be an instance of Ebert's conservative resistance, but it is not an uncritical one. Ebert repeats Wieland's text, but acknowledges the impossibility of writing as Wieland did. He brings to art the same kind of conscious reflectiveness that he does to landscape. So when Ebert reformulates the question that Wieland's speaker poses to the muses as "wer hebt *heute* von *unseren* Augen den Nebel, der auf der *Vorwelt Wundern* liegt?" ("who *today* will lift from our eyes the fog that rests on the marvels of the world that was?"),[322] he is at once orienting himself in a line of descent from Wieland, while also making visible the gap that separates him from his eighteenth century predecessor. In the repetition of Wieland, the conventionality of Ebert's "style exercise" becomes almost embarrassingly visible, but that visibility in turn is a strategy for opening the novel's reflection on the uncertain status of art in a degraded world.[323] Where Wieland's text begins with an appeal to the muses, for instance, their absence in Ebert's text is all the more conspicuous for the extent to which he is otherwise borrowing Wieland's language. The resolution Ebert offers to this problem is a tack in a different direction: it is not necessary to do as Wieland did and seek the marvels of the past in the orient, because "zehn Schritte weit von unserer Tür liegen sie – zehn, zwanzig, dreißig Jahre ab," ("they lie ten paces away from our door – ten, twenty, thirty years away"), at a time before the redirection of streams, the arrival of the railway, and the

[321] Raabe, BA, 16 : 114.
[322] Raabe, BA, 16 : 8.
[323] This is the critical function of repetition that Eric Downing sees at work in realism. Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction*, 1–23, especially 12–13.

implementation of monoculture.[324] With the environment thus so thoroughly controlled by modern technologies, the creation of art is no longer about poeticizing the spatially distant, aestheticizing a reality that is proximate, but asynchronic or already irretrievably lost.

This is the backwards looking aspect that is in juxtaposition to the representation of progress in the ecosocial sphere as much as in the landscape.[325] Through the appropriation of Wieland as well as through the other instances of repetition in this first section, Ebert instantiates a moment of epigonal thinking within his text. As a member of the Pfister family and specifically as the offspring of Bertram, Ebert is already an epigone in the etymological sense of the term.[326] His incapacity to discover Wieland's "old romantic country" makes him an epigone in the sense that the term gained after Karl Immermann's novel *Die Epigonen*: the epigone not only as a member of a later generation, but as the one who stands in the shadow of his ancestors. The implications of such a position open the term up to a spectrum of associations and judgments,[327] resulting generally in its pejorative connotations.[328] In his critical re-evaluation of the concept,

[324] Raabe, BA, 16 : 8.

[325] This aspect of the novel is surely what gives it a conservative appearance in the most basic sense of the term, and consequently is the aspect that Fehse and Pongs focus on. On this point Sammons offers a few observations that are critical for evaluating the text's political and cultural stance: "Furthermore, to *resist* modern evolution, to try to salvage values that appear to be threatened, is not to ignore it or to pretend that the changes are not taking place. Such resistance may be conservative – as Raabe to some extent was – or reactionary, which he decidedly was not – but it is one kind of relationship to the modern. If one has a temperamental preference for the progressive over the conservative, as I do, one may regret this, and even feel that it injures the artistic vision. But there are some issues – and ecology is one of them – in which genuine conservative values have been revived in the most progressive minds, coming to war with another sense of the progressive that has come to seem traditional." Sammons, *The Shifting Fortunes of Wilhelm Raabe*, 272.

[326] For an explanation and history of the concept of epigonality, see Manfred Windfuhr, "Der Epigone - Begriff, Phänomen und Bewußtsein," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 4 (1959): 182–209.

[327] As Kamann observers: "Versucht man die kritischen und historiographischen Thematisierungen von Epigonalität in jener Zeit [um 1850] zu überblicken, so fällt auf, daß von unterschiedlichen Autoren mit unterschiedlichster Programmatik Begriffe wie Dilettantismus, Epigonentum, Spätzeitlichkeit, Geniekult, Formalismus, Gehaltlosigkeit oder Restauration immer wieder neu ausgetauscht, unterschiedlich bestimmt und nirgends klar voneinander geschieden werden." Kamann, *Epigonalität als ästhetisches Vermögen*, 132.

[328] Burkhard Meyer-Sieckendiek summarizes the problem thus: "Spricht man vom Epigonentum eines Künstlers, so tut man dies in bewußt wertender Absicht. Man unterstellet elementare Defizite, verweist auf die Konventionalität seiner gestalterischen Mittel und Motive, auf fehlende Ausdruckskraft bzw. mangelnde Eigenständigkeit. Zudem benennt man die entscheidenden Vorläufer, auf die sich ein derart epigonal Schreibender beziehen läßt. Denn dies ist in der Regel die abwertende These: Ohne die vom Vorläufer

however, Kamann argues against a view that dismisses epigonality as a sign of artistic deficiency, and instead speaks of epigonality as a *Vermögen* ("strength"): both in the sense of an ability to realize an artistic potential by working with a tradition from which there is neither escape nor a desire to escape, and in the sense of ownership of a tradition that historism renders ever present.[329] Kamann sees two aspects of epigonality that he claims are decisive for Raabe's poetics in general: the permanence of the historical as well as its processuality, the latter of which destroying all that had been.[330] Conservatism in this novel is about both environmental and aesthetic conservationism. But in another relativizing gesture, the novel casts doubt on the ends of this conservationism: the mill's environs exist in the narrative present for Ebert to pursue his writing as a kind of leisure activity, while the sheets of the notebook themselves are destined for the darkness of the trunk in his Berlin apartment.[331]

Ebert's concern at the novel's opening is about the conditions of literary production under nineteenth century ecosocial conditions. But the production of literature, and art more generally, further complicates the status of art at the reception end. The key point of aesthetic reflection does not begin with Ebert, but his wife Emmy, a fact that has been overlooked by a surprising number of critical commentaries that see her strictly as the voice of urban modernity.[332] Emmy

erarbetieten, zumeist gar längst ausgeführten Themen, Formen und Motive wäre das Werk der Epigonen im Grunde nicht denkbar." Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek, *Die Ästhetik der Epigonalität: Theorie und Praxis wiederholenden Schreibens im 19. Jahrhundert: Immermann, Keller, Stifter, Nietzsche* (Tübingen: Francke, 2001), 135.

329 Kamann, *Epigonalität als ästhetisches Vermögen*, 8–9.

330 Ibid., 104. See also Horst Denkler's discussion of Raabe's view of history in "Die Antwort literarischer Phantasie auf eine der »größeren Fragen der Zeit«," 91–92. Also Joachim Worthmann: "Diese Reduktion der Welterfahrung auf die Bedingungen der Zeit-Wirklichkeit selbst ermöglicht, daß der Dichter jetzt ebenso auf Versöhnung des Unversöhnbaren, auf die durch Moralisierung erzielte Schein-Harmonie seines Frühwerks verzichtet wie auf Versuche, jene Harmonie dadurch zu erreichen, daß er – wie etwa Freytag – das Rad der Geschichte anzuhalten trachtet." Joachim Worthmann, *Probleme des Zeitromans: Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Romans im 19. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 1974), 135.

331 Raabe, BA, 16 : 150.

332 While there is certainly no denying that the text assigns her this role, the fact that Emmy brings to the novel its most crucial aesthetic observations runs counter to the reductive image of her as being to a greater or lesser extent a naïve young urbanite. To cite a few examples: Horst Denkler, for instance, characterizes the contrast that

wonders during the honeymoon:

> »Wo bleiben alle die Bilder?« das ist eine Frage, die einem auf jeder Kunstausstellung wohl einige Male ans Ohr klingt und auf die man nur deshalb nicht mehr achtet, weil man dieselbe sich selber bereits dann und wann gestellt hat.
>
> "Where do all the pictures go?" That is a question one hears sometimes at any art exhibition and that we don't even pay attention to anymore, because we pose it to ourselves now and again.[333]

Emmy's "nachdenkliche Frage" ("thought-provoking question")[334] which Ebert appropriates as a recurring motif in his narrative, leads into a rather lengthy essayistic discourse on the ephemerality of art. She speaks of her "melancholisches Unbehagen" ("melancholic discomfort") when she wonders what becomes of all of the paintings created year after year that are never seen outside of the galleries. "Und immer malen die Herren Maler andere, wenn es auch von Jahr

she poses as being a question of the "nüchtern-praktische Vernunft der Großstädterin." Denkler, "Die Antwort literarischer Phantasie auf eine der »größeren Fragen der Zeit«," 98. Barker Fairley recognizes that Emmy is a more observant character than her age might let on, but discusses her perceptiveness only in terms of Ebert's problematic attraction to such ghostly places as the mill and the cemetery that her father enjoyed visiting. Fairley, *Wilhelm Raabe: An Introduction to His Novels*, 46. Swales reads Emmy in a more differentiated way. He rightly insists that her intelligence should not be underestimated, and that her "weltliche – ausgesprochen gegenwartsbezogene – Andandlung ist aber keineswegs eine Verscheuchung der (poetischen, sprich artistischen) Bilder." See Martin Swales, *Epochenbuch Realismus: Romane und Erzählungen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1997), 138. Swales, though, still credits the "wo bleiben alle die Bilder" question to Ebert, and characterizes Emmy as "eine praktische, lebenslustige junge Frau, die ihren Mann aus dem Bann des Vergangenen reißt." Ibid., 137. "We might call her Thoroughly Modern Emmy," Jeffrey Sammons writes, and while he argues against a reading of her as "a complacent representative of the crass modern," his grounds for this is that "Raabe has given her too many attractive and loving features." Sammons, *Wilhelm Raabe: The Fiction of the Alternative Community*, 276. Markus Winkler is also more sympathetic to Emmy, but still sees her only in terms of her admittedly many naïve moments in the novel, which only serve the novel's aesthetic reflection insofar as they prompt Ebert to reflect on the act of narration. According to Winkler, Emmy "nimmt also selbst Partei für die industriell organisierte Herrschaft des Nutzens; der scharfe, bisweilen komische Kontrast zwischen diesem Pragmatismus und Eberhards Versuch, sich erzählend und schreibend in die schöne Vergangenheit zu versenken, ist demnach die Fortsetzung des kulturellen Konflikts zwischen dem Nützlichen und dem Schönen." Markus Winkler, "Die Ästhetik des Nützlichen in „Pfisters Mühle": Problemgeschichtliche Überlegungen zu Wilhelm Raabes Erzählung," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1997, 26. Harald Tausch also emphasizes Emmy's function as breaking melancholic reflections through her various interruptions in his essay "Wasser auf Pfisters Mühle. Zu Raabes humoristischem Erinnern der Dinge," 188–189, although the "wo bleiben alle die Bilder" speech is arguably one of the most profoundly melancholic moments in the novel. If she never fully develops her reflections on the poetological questions that the novel raises, it is because Ebert has a habit of cutting her off and trivializing her thoughts.

[333] Raabe, BA, 16 : 30.

[334] Ibid.

zu Jahr so ziemlich die nämlichen bleiben" ("And the painters always paint others, even though they're all pretty much the same from year to year").[335] If the more reflective aspect of her character tends to fall by the wayside, it is probably because of Ebert's consistently affectionate yet dismissive attitude towards her more profound observations, an attitude that shines through in his answer to the "wo bleiben alle die Bilder" speech. The response he offers is at once metaphysical and strongly pedantic:

> Es sind nur die Umrisse und die Farben, welche wechseln; Rahmen und Leinwand bleiben. Jaja, mein armes Kind, es würde uns, die wir selber vorübergehen, den Raum arg beschränken im Leben, wenn alle die Bilder blieben!
>
> It is only the forms and the colors that change, the frame and the canvas remain. Yes, my poor child, things would get pretty cramped for us, who are ourselves ephemeral beings, if all the pictures stayed![336]

The style of the works of art change, but art itself remains. The statement seems hopeful. The comment about art is also about impermanence and the processuality of history in the context of the novel: the era of Krickerode will pass, just as the era of the mill is passing, but the essence of the world will go on. But the hope it offers is also flimsy. The experience of the mill stream shows that there is no stable essence, no norm in nature or elsewhere that will stay constant through historical change. The context of Ebert's statement alone calls it into question: first, his statement is as much an attempt to silence Emmy's uncomfortable observations as it is an attempt to lay out any sort of theoretical claim. Second, even if we can look beyond the context and interrogate the statement for what it says about art, the implications would seem to cut two ways. If the essence of art remains, then we can take the long view and see the production and the reception of artworks as rising above immediate historical conditions. Or else, the essence of art

[335] Ibid.
[336] Raabe, BA, 16 : 31.

follows the logic of mass production, resulting in a dearth of variation that renders the particular work entirely fungible. Finally, and most importantly, no matter what theoretical weight we lend Ebert's response or how we interpret it, he makes it in the knoweldge that the mill is only a few weeks away from being broken up to make room for a factory. The irreversibility of the historical process trumps the narrator's conservative impulses.

Either way, Ebert's response is only preliminary, as Emmy's question recurs throughout the text. The closest Ebert comes to an answer is at the moment when the summer vacation ends and demolition of the mill begins. The first chestnut tree falls just as Ebert and Emmy board a coach to the train station, setting in motion an experience of acceleration that only sharpens the problems of perception and ephemerality contained in the "where do all the pictures go?" speech.

> Und dann – war Pfisters Mühle nur noch in dem, was ich mit mir führte auf diesem rasselnden, klirrenden, klappernden Eilzuge, vorbei an dem Raum und an der Zeit.
>
> Da brauchte ich dann wohl nicht mehr zu fragen: Wo bleiben alle die Bilder? . . . Die von ihnen, welche bleiben, lassen sich am besten wohl betrachten im Halbtraum vom Fenster eines an der bunten, wechselnden Welt vorüberfliegenden Eisenbahnwagens. –
>
> And then – Pfister's mill only existed in what I was carrying with me on the rattling, clanking, clattering express train, away past space and time.
>
> So I no longer needed to ask: Where do all the pictures go? . . . Those that stay are probably best regarded while in a waking dream, looking out from the window of a train car as it flies past the colorful, shifting world. –[337]

The hyphen following "and then" marks the moment when the train begins to accelerate, but also registers at the textual level the moment in Ebert's experience when another marvel of the world that was was lost to the new forces of production. It is the moment when Ebert parts for good from the past that structures his poetic realist project, and he does so within the space of the train, the ultimate sign of industrial modernity. Instead of the unity of place, Ebert experiences the

[337] Raabe, BA, 16 : 156. Ellipsis in original.

environment as a series of disconnected images, with the windows serving the same functions as the never-changing frames at Emmy's art exhibitions.[338]

Albrecht Koschorke has argued that the departure on the train is the moment in *Pfisters Mühle* where the realist text becomes a substitute for what it refers to, and that poetic realism is now only possible in the disappearance of its reality.[339] But if this is the case, then the disappearance is never complete. Ebert's manuscript is, as he tells us, water damaged from where he was caught in a rainstorm while writing, and there is dirt on one of the pages from when the wind picked it up and Ebert had to go chasing around a tree to retrieve it. The traces of the environment on the document are what is left over after the end. They are more than nothing, but not much more, because they have a tenuous status as carriers of the memory of a place. By themselves such small traces would be meaningless. But such small traces become integrated into the poetic project because they become legible as leftovers of the storm or the soil under the tree, moments in the experience of the place that the realist narrator dutifully records.[340] The text and the dirt on the page play a complementary function: the dirt is legible as a memento because of the text, and the text gains authority as a record of reality from the dirt. This is a positive function of dirt for the realist project: where matter out of place ruptured the idyll of the mill

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[338] For an account of the sense of loss of continuity in the experience of the landscape that came with nineteenth century train travel, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise: Zur Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Verlag, 1981), 52–69. The beginning of the train ride for Ebert is the feeling of the "Unentrinnbarkeit vor einer Veränderung des Daseins" of one who fancied himself "noch in der Waldluft der Romantik oder in der Studierstube der Vergangenheit behametet," as Manfred Riedel characterizes the advent of train travel for the authors of the *Biedermeier* generation in his essay "Vom Biedermeier zum Maschinenzeitalter: Zur Kulturgeschichte der ersten Eisenbahnen in Deutschland," in *Technik in der Literatur: Ein Forschungsüberblick in zwölf Aufsätzen*, ed. Harro Segeberg (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987), 103.

[339] "Deutlicher kann innerhalb eines realistisch gehaltenen Szenarios nicht akzentuiert werden, daß der Text die paradoxe Aufgabe übernommen hat, weniger epische Wiedergabe als Substitut seines Gegenstandes zu sein. Poetische Rede ist nur noch möglich als lang hingezogene Rede vom Verschwinden ihrer Stoffe, ihrer Referenzen, der Realität." Albrecht Koschorke, *Die Geschichte des Horizonts: Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung in literarischen Landschaftsbildern* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990), 321.

[340] Raabe, BA, 16 : 158-159.

forever, the realist claim to represent reality *still* draws support from the persistence of its own realia.

There is certainly acceptance on Ebert's part of the processuality of history, but in keeping with his reflective nature, there are two sides to his reaction and therefore the reaction of the realist text to the ecosocial conditions of reality under the sign of Krickerode. For his part, Ebert's acceptance here is matched by apocalyptic rhetoric elsewhere. He likens the mill to the church at Sardis, for instance, quoting the angel's message that "thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."[341] The appearance of life and essence of death harkens again to the "Et in Arcadia Ego" motif, even as life and death divide more sharply along the lines of an appearance versus essence dichotomy. The split for Ebert between an uneasy, if somber acceptance on the one hand and apocalypticism on the other is mirrored in two poems that refract the way nature and environment are imagined in the novel. The first is Ferdinand Alexander Schnezler's poem "Die verlassene Mühle" ("The Abandoned Mill," 1833), the major intertext in Ebert's account. The other is the character Lippoldes' apocalyptic poem "Einst kommt die Stunde" ("Someday the Hour Will Come").

First Schnezler: It is not just in our own time that Schnezler has been forgotten; the memory of his works was fading when Raabe composed his novel. In Franz Brümmer's 1891 entry on Schnezler for the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* he regrets that Schnezler has faded into obscurity.[342] The obvious answer to why this text is so prominent is its thematic affinity to Ebert's own position. In Schnezler's poem, the speaker is wandering through a forest when he arrives at the ruins of a mill, apparently without an understanding of how his course brought him

[341] *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, Rev. 3.1.
[342] Franz Brümmer, "Schnezler, August," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig: Verlag Duncker und Humblot, 1891), 173.

there. The building is collapsing in on itself, the mill's works are silent, and the mill wheels are covered in moss.[343] As the sun sets and the moon rises, the speaker suddenly sees dwarves emerge out of the bushes carrying sacks of grain for milling, while the mill's works come back to life. The air fills with the sound of the commotion, which continues until:

> Da öffnet sich ein Fensterlein,
> das einzige noch ganze,
> ein schönes bleiches Mägdelein
> zeigt sich im Mondenglanze
> und ruft vernehmlich durch's Gebraus
> mit süßer Stimme klang hinaus:
> „Nun habt ihr doch, ihr Leute,
> genug des Mehls für heute!"
>
> Then a small window opens
> the only one intact
> a lovely pale maiden
> shows herself in the moonlight
> and calls clearly through the roar
> with a sweet voice she sounded out:
> "That's enough for now, you people
> you have enough flour for today!" [344]

The morning mist then envelopes the mill, and when the speaker returns the following day, it is again a ruin, one which haunts him for the rest of his life. Like Ebert, who while writing experiences the past as if it were the present, the speaker's encounter with the mill sparks an uncanny breakdown in the logic of the world of the text.[345] But in terms of poetic form, Schnezler's poem adheres to a uniform repetition across its seven stanzas: each stanza consists of eight lines, with a metrical structure that perfectly mirrors the rhyme scheme throughout, save for the last stanza, which introduces slight variation. In spite of the uncanniness of the vision and the shift between various tenses and perspectives in time, the scene is narrated in a straightforward

[343] The poem is printed in Raabe, BA, 16 : 536.
[344] In Raabe, BA, 16 : 537.
[345] In one scene, as Ebert thinks of the mill in the poem, he finds himself repeating the experience of the speaker as a kind of literary déjà-vu. Raabe, BA, 16 : 133.

fashion with little symbolic significance. In both content and form "Die verlassene Mühle" is marked by convention and repetition: the speaker even physically returns to the site in the poem's final stanza.

Ebert considers the poem to be a beautiful allegory, "in der sich Gleichnis und Dichtung so vollkommen decken" ("in which allegory and poetry complement each other so well"), an allegory in which the woman represents poetry whose mill in the romantic forest has fallen to speculators.[346] If we assume that this is the reading that the novel endorses, then the poem is quoted precisely because of its romanticism and its appeal to nature, in opposition to speculative capital and its catastrophic effects on the environment. This argument leads us to the moment of conservative resistance in the text, one that might problematically lead us to the kind of conclusion that Wilhelm Fehse draws about the poem, that it is a piece of authentic lyric poetry that Raabe deploys against the ethos of 1880s sentimental-ideological *Butzenscheibenlyrik.*[347] The problem is that Ebert's interpretation is rather willful, in that it seems to be less sustained by the text itself, and instead appears more contingent upon the context of his story. As an epigonal author, Ebert is also surely drawn in by the poem as a document of cliché *Mühlenromantik*.[348]

"Einst kommt die Stunde" is the poetic antipode to the Schnezler poem. Instead of steady decline as in the latter, we see an unexpected, fast-moving, all-consuming end of the world in Lippoldes' poem a way that blends comedy with pathos, and which breaks down the sort of rigid conventional form that structures "Die verlassene Mühle." It makes especially visible the status of dirt as a poetic agent. Lippoldes is a living anachronism from the *Vormärz* period reduced to alcoholism as a means of coping with a world in which he no longer belongs. The novel's

[346] Raabe, BA, 16 : 133.
[347] Fehse, *Wilhelm Raabe: Sein Leben und seine Werke*, 484.
[348] For a history of the history of cultural associations with mills, including a discussion of *Pfisters Mühle*, see Bayerl, "Herrn Pfisters und anderer Leute Mühlen," 51–101.

apocalyptic tenor peaks in the poem "Einst kommt die Stunde." Lippoldes recites the text at Bertram Pfister's Christmas party, where the sentimental tradition continues, even as the scent of baked goods competes with the stench of hydrogen sulfide, spoiling the efforts to have a cheerful Christmas in spite of the smell by standing up and reciting,

> Einst kommt die Stunde – denkt nicht, sie sei ferne -,
> Da fallen vom Himmel die goldenen Sterne,
> Da wird gefegt das alte Haus,
> Da wird gekehrt der Plunder aus.
> Der liebe, der alte, vertraute Plunder,
> Viel tausend Geschlechter Zeichen und Wunder:
> Die Mutter, das Kind, die Zeit und der Raum!
> Kein Spinnweb wird im Winkel vergessen,
> Was der Körper hielt, was der Geist besessen,
> Was das Herz gefühlt, was der Magen verdaut;
> Und *Tod* heißt der Bräutigam, *Nichts* heißt die Braut!
>
> Someday the hour will come – think not, that it be far -,
> Then the golden stars will fall from the sky,
> Then the old house will be swept clean,
> Then the stuff will be cleared out.
> The dear, the old, well known things,
> Thousands of generations' signs and marvels
> The mother, the child, time and space!
> Not even a cobweb in the corner will be forgotten,
> What the body had held, what the soul possessed,
> What the heart had felt, what the stomach digested,
> And *Death* is the bridegroom, *Nothing* the bride![349]

The end of the world imagery moves from the image of the stars falling to earth (as in Revelation 6.13) to the annihilation of the domestic and culminates in a nihilistic wedding. The clearing away of all of the things in the household signifies the historical turn that the apocalypse brings about (and is repeated at the climax of *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*).[350] But where the world is simply falling apart in the first stanza, the dirty cause of destruction makes its entrance in the

[349] Raabe, BA, 16 : 85-86.

[350] There is a pattern in Raabe of the giving up or obliteration of things as a signal for historical change, as Mariane Wünsch points out in "Eigentum und Familie: Raabes Spätwerk und der Realismus," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 31 (1987): 1987 : 254.

second:

> Wie Schade wird das sein! Dann kehrt man dort
> Den guten Kanzeleirat weg und seinen Stuhl,
> Auf dem er fünfzig Jahr lang kalkulierte.
> Vergeblich wartet mit der Suppe seine Alte,
> Nicht lange doch; denn plötzlich füllt ein mächt'ges
> Gestäub die Gasse, dringt in Tür und Fenster –
> Der Kehrichtsstaub des Weltenuntergangs.
>
> Sehr drollig wird das sein für den, der da zuletzt lacht,
> Sieht er im Wirbel fliegen, was ihn quälte,
> Bis selber ihn der letzte Kehraus faßt.
>
> It will be too bad! Then one will sweep
> The good councilor away and his chair,
> On which he calculated for fifty years.
> In vain his wife will wait with the soup,
> But not for long, for suddenly a mighty dust
> Fills the lane, pushes in through door and window –
> The broom sweepings of the end of the world.
>
> It will be quite droll for the one who laughs last
> He will see what tormented him fly off in a whirlwind,
> Until the last sweeping away gets him as well.[351]

The bad air's destruction of a gendered division of labor within the house engulfs the world outside of the house as well, and ultimately even the human subject who recounts this scene vanishes into the elements. "Einst kommt die Stunde" becomes increasingly comic with lines such as "it will be too bad," creating a humorously grotesque incongruity between tone and subject matter.[352] The "mächt'ges Gestäub" is reminiscent both of the foul smelling air that results from the water pollution, and from the clouds of smog that both Krickerode and Asche's factory pump into the atmosphere. The mighty dust in the poem furthermore has a

[351] Raabe, BA, 16 : 85-86.

[352] See Helmers, "Raabe als Kritiker von Umweltzerstörung," 208. Heinrich Detering echoes Helmers point when he writes "so gewinnt hier die apokalyptische Vision ihre grausige Aggressivität: gerade daraus, daß sie nicht mehr ernstgenommen, daß sie vielmehr im Spiel mit den Bildern vom weggezogenen Stuhl, dem Auskehren des alten Plunders und dem „Kehrichtsstaub" ironisch gebrochen wird." Detering, "Ökologische Krise und ästhetische Innovation im Werk Wilhelm Raabes," 18.

phantasmagorical quality to it that pollution in the story itself does not. There is never any doubt that Krickerode is the source of the hydrogen suflide, but the novel nevertheless needs Asche to scientifically prove it. In the poem, however, the dust has no point of origin, it is instead a significant actor within the world of the text, but it also reaches out into the poetic form. Heinrich Detering shows in his reading of the poem that whereas the first stanza consists of rhymed verses that follow a basic metric pattern, the rhyme and meter, like the world depicted, vanish from one stanza to the next, so that the poem's structure breaks apart before our eyes.[353] In this, I would add, the poem crystallizes the tendency towards the formlessness of a summer vacation notebook. The dust is here not matter out of place, but matter with every place and no place. Its omnipresence breaks down neat divisions between the inside of the councilor's house and the atmosphere outside, but also of the division between a product and a byproduct (as in the sweetness of beet sugar as opposed to the foulness of hydrogen sulfide), and ultimately of nature as something pure and fresh. For Bruno Latour, it is the boundless proliferation of such "matters of concern" that make such matters as asbestos in his example, "mighty dust" in this one, into an ecological crisis.[354]

Lippoldes, in a way, meets the same end as his speaker, disappearing into the elements when he drowns in the "trüben Schlammflut" ("dreary flow of ooze"), his death signified by the hat drifting in circles on the surface.[355] As the embodiment of genuine poetic ability, in having Lippoldes die the novel also symbolically drowns poetry in the polluted river. We might conclude then that the novel sees environmental depredation as negating the conditions of possibility for poesy after all. Because he is past his time, it would seem that the literary tradition

[353] Detering, "Ökologische Krise und ästhetische Innovation im Werk Wilhelm Raabes," 19.
[354] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 23–24.
[355] Raabe, BA, 16 : 152, 150.

drowns with Lippoldes. But the apocalyptic vision goes unrealized, and the disappearance of poesy into industrial pollution is not the end of the story. Instead the novel closes with an image of apparent reconciliation: Ebert Pfister, Adam Asche, and their spouses take tea in view of Asche's massive laundry cleaning facility pumping out smog and effluent into the River Spree. Asche reintroduces the classical tradition into the narrative: he is brushing up on his ancient Greek, and he has dubbed his factory "Rhakopyrgos," a fanciful Greek term of Raabe's own invention meaning "rag mountain."[356] What this all amounts to is the introduction of the pastoral tradition into an image of environmental depredation in the spirit of Asche's quip that the Styx flows through Arcadia. But this does not obviate Lippoldes' vision of environmental apocalypse:

> Wir gehen zum Tee unter der Veranda. Nebenan klappert und lärmt die große Fleckenreinigungsanstalt und bläst ihr Gewölk zum Abendhimmel empor fast so arg wie Krickerode. Der größere, wenn auch nicht große Fluß ist, trotzdem daß wir auch ihn nach Kräften verunreinigen, von allerlei Ruderfahrzeugen und Segeln belebt und scheint Rhakopyrgos als etwas ganz Selbstverständliches und höchst Gleichgültiges zu nehmen.
>
> We go to tea under the veranda. Nearby the great stain cleaning facility clacks and rattles and blows its clouds up into the evening sky almost as badly as Krickerode. The larger, if not particularly large river is alive with rowboats and sails, even though we are dirtying it too with all our might, and they seem to take Rhakopyrgos as something self-explanatory and quite unimportant.[357]

The final scene is remarkable for its dissonance: the people rowing their boats continue to pursue their recreational experience of nature in spite of the factory, and the consumption of food and drink proceeds even though the presence of a factory and the pollution it released made such enjoyment impossible at Pfister's mill. It is as if the dirtying of air and water were not happening before their very eyes. But Ebert's tone belies his knowledge that he is witnessing a developing ecological catastrophe. He compares Rhakopyrgos to Krickerode, and the description retains the

[356] Raabe, BA, 16 : 544.
[357] Raabe, BA, 16 : 177.

apocalyptic image of clouds of pollution being blown into the sky. Yet that pollution is now both seen and unseen, an accepted part of the landscape that nonetheless makes its way into the narrative.

This circumstance has led Colin Riordan in an ecocritical study of German literature prior to World War I to argue that Raabe's own liberal nationalism is expressed in this scene because it stages a harmonization process wherein environmental depredation is reconciled to the demands of an industrial nation-state.[358] Riordan's argument adds an ecocritical twist to Georg Lukács' judgment that the end of the novel is emblematic of Raabe's "Wunschtraum nach Versöhnung" ("dream of reconciliation").[359] This argument captures a subtle but significant psychological process of adaptation in *Pfisters Mühle,* but I take exception to the argument that Ebert's adaptation simply harmonizes the catastrophe away. What looks like harmonization is actually the result of the mediation of environmental depredation through Ebert's own partisan consciousness. His own commitment to mimetic realism keeps the unfolding ecological catastrophe in view and in the text, even as he seems suddenly resigned to what Asche's factory is doing to the air and water. By this point in the novel the process of psychological stabilization has been thoroughly ironicized, so that it cannot be taken seriously as a credible response to a high capitalism under which all that is solid melts into the foul smelling air.[360] Ebert understands the pollution and its consequences well enough – at least as well as a person of his historical moment can. What is gone is not the trouble of pollution, but the perception that pollution constitutes an aesthetic offense. As Hans Rindisbacher points out, the people in this scene "reveal

[358] Colin Riordan, "German Literature, Nature and Modernity before 1914," in *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism*, ed. Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006), 322–323.
[359] Lukács, "Wilhelm Raabe," 246.
[360] Denkler, "Die Antwort literarischer Phantasie auf eine der »größeren Fragen der Zeit«," 100.

their mechanisms of coping essentially as the ideological invocation of *non olet* in an atmosphere that increasingly stinks."[361] They have accepted the ideological illusion that Rhakopyrgos, its effluent, and its smog are "natural" in the most normative sense. What appears to be reconciliation is an instance of a narrative strategy that Berbeli Wanning sees as a typical move on Raabe's part: narrating the new – in this case pollution – through familiar forms that reduces the horror, only to make that horror more intensively apparent.[362] We are left at the end with a dissonance that troubles Ebert's efforts to poeticize the reality of what he sees from the veranda, and moreover implicitly makes a forceful critique about human blindness to the realities of ecological destruction.

From Green Hedges to Brick Walls: Die Akten des Vogelsangs

Where industrial pollution informed the reflection on the contemporary status of realism and art more generally in *Pfisters Mühle*, *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*, which appeared twelve years later, asks specifically about the possibility of poetic transcendence of the material world given the more advanced stage at which nature is produced by and for 1890s' capitalism. In *Pfisters Mühle* the poetic "marvels of the world that was" are simply buried beneath the social character of nature. We see that Ebert, like the other characters in the story, emerges from the work of representing this prior world now more comfortable with his modern ecosocial reality, so that the reality of environmental depredation is barely acknowledged and goes *almost* unseen. *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* also represents a historical process of the production of space through

[361] Hans Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 112.
[362] Wanning, *Die Fiktionalität der Natur*, 349.

late nineteenth century industrialization and urbanization. But the leftovers of this process, the individuals and places that have not or have not yet been subsumed under the dominant capitalist logic are placed more in the center of the narrative.

Die Akten des Vogelsangs reprises the narrative conceit of *Pfisters Mühle* and other Raabe novels of a first-person narrator, Karl Krumhardt, who commits to paper the story that he has witnessed. Karl receives one November evening a letter from Helene Mungo née Trotzendorff informing him that their mutual childhood friend, Velten Andres, has died. The arrival of the letter brings back the memory of their story, and so Karl, true to his profession as a jurist and bureaucrat, opens a file, the content of which constitutes the text that we the readers hold in our hands. We learn that he and Velten were friends in the Vogelsang, a settlement formerly outside of an expanding city somewhere in Germany that over the course of the narrated timeframe is transformed piecemeal from an idyllic neighborhood into an anonymous industrial district. Karl and Velten are joined by Helene Trotzendorff, member of a family that emigrated to the United States and who has returned with her mother after her father lost all of his wealth and nearly landed in Sing Sing Prison. As the three grow up, their paths diverge: Karl studies law and begins a career, Helene emigrates again when her father makes a new fortune, and Velten studies for a time in Berlin before setting off to the United States in pursuit of Helene. But Helene has already married a Chicago millionaire, and so Velten begins drifting through the world, ultimately rebelling against bourgeois notions of property by burning the contents of his mother's house. As with *Pfisters Mühle*, this text also has a certain formal indeterminacy: instead of a summer vacation notebook, as in the case of the former, we have a protocol reporting on a set of documents and papers in this novel. Karl's protocol is even further removed from its referent

than Ebert's notebook. The disconnect between text and place becomes more apparent when we compare the published title to Raabe's working title: "Aus dem Vogelsang" ("From the Birdsong")[363] still suggests a more direct connection to the place,[364] whereas *Akten* underscores the artifactual status of the text relative to a place that essentially no longer exists.

Karl introduces the "old" Vogelsang by celebrating it as a site of "neighborhood" (*Nachbarschaft*), a value that he claims is vanishing as more and more German cities cross the threshhold of 100,000 residents and officially gain metropolitan status.[365] Neighborhood is a harmonious way of relating to other humans as a community, but it also designates a condition of ecosocial harmony that lends the old Vogelsang its poetic character. The narrative arc Karl sketches is one of progressive alienation from nature, as factories and apartment blocks drive out all that is "green."

> Auch Gärten, die aneinandergrenzten und ihre Obstbaumzweige einander zureichten und ihre Zwetschen, Kirschen, Pflaumen, Äpfel und Birnen über lebendige Hecken weg nachbarschaftlich austeilten, gab es da noch zu *unserer Zeit,* als die Stadt noch nicht das „erste Hunderttausend" überschritten hatte und wir, Helene Trotzendorff, Velten Andres und Karl Krumhardt, Nachbarkinder im Vogelsang unter dem Osterberge waren. Bauschutt, Fabrikaschenwege, Kanalisationsarbeiten und dergleichen gab es auch noch nicht zu unserer Zeit in der Vorstadt, genannt „Zum Vogelsang". Die Vögel hatten dort wirklich noch nicht ihr Recht verloren, der Erde Loblied zu singen; sie brauchten noch nicht ihre Baupläne dem Stadtbauamt zur Begutachtung vorzulegen.[366]
>
> And there were gardens adjoining each other and extending their fruit tree branches toward each other, exchanging their plums, cherries, apples, and pears like good neighbors across the green hedges, *in our time*, when the town had not

[363] Wilhelm Raabe, "Die Akten des Vogelsangs," Nachlass Wilhelm Raabe, Schriftsteller (1831-1910), H III 10 : 10, Stadtarchiv Braunschweig.

[364] "Place" in *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* is an ambiguous value, as John Lyon argues in his book *Out of Place.* The characters "face a painful choice: either relinquish place and the sense of humanity connected with it or hold on to place and find constraint, confinement and alienation from the modern world." John B. Lyon, *Out of Place: German Realism, Displacement, and Modernity* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 108.

[365] A population of 100,000 being, specifically, the official definition of "metropolis" in nineteenth century Germany. See Horst Matzerath, *Urbanisierung in Preußen, 1815-1914* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer / Deutscher Gemeindeverlag, 1985), 111–114.

[366] Raabe, BA, 19 : 219, emphasis in original.

> yet passed the hundred-thousand mark and we – Helene Trotzendorff, Velten Andres, and Karl Krumhardt – were neighbor children in the Birdsong at the foot of Easter Hill. Construction debris, [fly ash pavement], sewer and drainage work, etc. were also not to be seen in the suburb called "on the Birdsong" in our time. The birds there had not yet lost their right to sing their song in praise of the earth. They were not yet required to submit their construction projects to the city planning office for approval.[367]

In his reading of this description John Lyon underscores the "interconnectedness" of the gardens as the fruit trees reach across to each other, arguing that the sense of place here is derived from nature as much as from the relations between humans.[368] The pleasant gardens and fruit trees are contrasted against the inorganic human constructions to which they would later give way, and in Karl's mind, at least, the hedges solidify the image of intact nature.[369] But what emerges in Karl's account without his explicit acknowledgment is that the hedges also delineate borders between various pieces of property, and it is the relation to property that determines one's place in what Nancy Kaiser calls the Vogelsang's "unconscious hierarchy of residency."[370] The hedges are thus

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[367] Wilhelm Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013), 5. The general consensus in the research is that the Braunschweig quarter Krähenfeld (now a part of the Viewegsgarten-Bebelhof district) was the inspiration for the Vogelsang. Raabe's first Braunschweig address was here. See Raabe, BA, 19 : 450-451. In "Erinnerungen aus meinem Vaterhause," published in 1931, Wilhelm Raabe's daughter Klara Behrens-Raabe's memory of the Krähenfeld around 1878 strongly echoes this passage in *Die Akten*: "Das Krähenfeld war eine vor dem Augusttore ziemlich weit sich hinziehende Ebene mit wenigen Ein- bis Zweifamilienhäusern, deren Gärten durch grüne Hecken oder hölzerne Zäune nur unvollkommen getrennt waren. Stacheldraht gab es, gottlob, noch nicht. Wir Kinder machten es also wie die Obstbäume, das rote Müllerbrot, die Syringen und Goldregen, wir kletterten darüber und darunter hin, und wir ernteten hüben und drüben, was sie freundlich hinhielten." She continues the Edenic motif when she describes the Krähenfeld as a "Gartenparadies" ("Garden paradise"). Klara Behrens-Raabe, "Erinnerungen aus meinem Vaterhaus," in *Wilhelm Raabe und sein Lebenskries: Mit 4 Bildbeilagen nach Originalen des Dichters*, ed. Heinrich Spiero (Verlaganstalt H. Klemm: Berlin, 1931), 15, 20.

[368] Lyon, *Out of Place*, 120.

[369] Irmgard Roebling writes of the hedges, "Die lebendigen Hecken vor und nach der ersten Nennung seines Names erscheinen zunächst jeweils abgesetzt von Bildern, die deren Zerstörung in der modernen Industriegesellschaft vor Augen stellen, um dann, aus dieser negativen Perspektive heraus, den Blick zu öffnen auf eine Zeit und ein Dasein in einem letzlich intakten Naturzusammenhang." Roebling, *Wilhelm Raabes doppelte Buchführung*, 113.

[370] Nancy Kaiser, "Reading Raabe's Realism: *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*," *Germanic Review* 59, no. 1 (1984): 5. While his characterization of the old Vogelsang as nothing more than a "Freizeitwelt" strikes me as imprecise, Folkers' argument about the way that the spatial dynamics of the old Vogelsang undermine neighborhood captures the problem with Karl's insistence on this value: "Die über die trennenden Gartenhecken hinweg möglichen Kommunikationen sind zerbrechlich, weil sie in keinem gemeinsamen Wollen oder Handeln fundiert sind." Gernot Folkers, *Besitz und Sicherheit: Über Entstehung und Zerfall einer bürgerlichen Illusion am Beispiel Goethes und Raabes* (Kronberg: Scriptor, 1976), 100.

organic phenomena in the service of social functions, natural inasmuch as they are living flora, but social in that they are the products of labor and the physical manifestations of property division.[371] Instead of being an image of intact nature, they serve as a technology of separation that make visible the social antagonisms that underlie Karl's idyllic representation of "neighborhood." The hedges as the dominant "green" objects in the novel implicate nature within the social relations that become more visibly reified during the Vogelsang's metamorphosis. Velten acknowledges the dialectical affinity between the organic phenomena and the inorganic structures that take their place when he remarks in a letter to his mother: "aus Büschen werden Bäume, aus Bäumen Hausmauern, aus Grün Grau" ("Where there were bushes, trees appear; after the trees come walls, green turns to gray").[372]

The green hedges, then, reprise the motif of the self-destructive idyll that was integral to *Pfisters Mühle*. The sheer frequency of the color green is indicative of its symbolic weight: it appears thirty-nine times over the course of the Braunschweig edition's 195 pages. The "Grüne Gasse" ("Green Lane") is the name of the street that runs through the neighborhood. Karl follows his father's casket "durch unsere vordem so grüne Kindheitsgasse" ("through the once so green lane of our childhood").[373] As the factories start to move in, the green becomes something that the remaining residents struggle to conserve in small pieces. For instance Hartleben, who is the first to sell some of his property for industrial development,[374] keeps a bit of his garden in an

[371] The image of the hedge appears elsewhere in Raabe's fiction, including *Pfisters Mühle.* The most significant example of the hedge as technology of separation comes from Raabe's 1891 novel *Stopfkuchen* where Heinrich Schaumann relates being abandoned by the other children under the hedge.

[372] Raabe, BA, 19 : 328. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 74.

[373] Raabe, BA, 19 : 336. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 79.

[374] Hartleben thus embodies the antinomies of "neighborhood" that ultimately precipitate the transition from "old" to "new" Vogelsang. "Das veränderte Bild des Nachbarn Hartleben, der sich im Rückblick vom Kinderschreck zu einem Repräsentanten der Nachbarschaftlichkeit wandelt und doch als erster dem Einbruch des Fortschritts das Tor öffnet, veranschaulicht exemplarisch den dialektischen Zusammenhang von Modernisierung und Erinnerung, der die soziale Kultur des Vogelsangs erst im Augenblick ihres unwiderruflichen Untergangs, also retrospektiv zur Folie moralischer Zeitkritik werden läßt. Damit ist zugleich die scharfe Grenze benannt, die

effort to cling to the aesthetic pleasure it affords, "doch wenigstens was Grünes vom Fenster aus im Auge zu haben" ("at least a bit of greenery left to look at from my window").[375] Such conservation efforts reduce the "green" spaces to the status of artifacts which, rather than being a part of some larger green totality, now instead *cite* the Vogelsang as it existed – or was thought to exist – in the past while also perpetuating a pattern of compartmentalization of space under bourgeois capital. "Nature" in the new Vogelsang has its own designated space, much as there is a strict division between spaces of labor (factories), residence (apartment buildings), and pleasure (dance halls).[376] The proliferation of the color green throughout the narrative thus resembles its use and abuse in contemporary political discourse as a metaphor for ecological wholeness.[377] But the color is also specific to realist theory, as it literalizes Friedrich Theodor Vischer's metaphor of the "green places" in order to subject it to the same relativizing move to which the novel subjects all of the values associated with the old Vogelsang.[378]

Raabes Reflexion des beschleunigten gesellschaftlichen Umbruchs von den regressiven Utopien jener traditionalistischen Ideologien trennt, die das geistige Klima im Deutschen Reich am Jahrhundertende nachhaltig zu beeinflussen begannen." Dirk Göttsche, *Zeitreflexion und Zeitkritik im Werk Wilhelm Raabes* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2000), 92.

375 Raabe, BA, 19 : 314. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 66.

376 Raabe, BA, 19 : 336. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 79.

377 "Die Farbe grün zählt, wie der Sonntag, zu der Metaphorik, mit der im Poetischen Realismus eine bedrohte, aber an einzelnen Stellen doch noch anzutreffende Lebenseinheit bezeichnet wird." Eberhard Geisler, "Abscheid vom Herzensmuseum: Die Auflösung des poetischen Realismus in Wilhelm Raabes 'Die Akten des Vogelsangs,'" in *Wilhelm Raabe: Studien zu seinem Leben und Werk. Aus Anlass des 150. Geburtstages (1831-1981)*, ed. Leo A. Lensing and Hans-Werner Peter (Braunschweig: pp-Verlag, 1981), 377.

378 See Vischer, *Aesthetik, oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*, 1,303–1,307. Raabe was versed in the theoretical discourses on realism in the 1850s, having attended public lectures on aesthetics, amongst other subjects, at the Friedrich Wilhelm University (today Humboldt University) in Berlin. For an account of Raabe's university studies, see Karl Hoppe, *Wilhelm Raabe: Beiträge zum Verständnis seiner Person und seines Werkes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967), 11–26. While he found the lectures valuable, the young Raabe felt alienated by Berlin's intellectual life, and by the city more generally. Looking back on his stay in Berlin and his studies he remarked in an often quoted letter to Thaddäus Lau of May 23, 1861, "eine ziemliche Menge sehr verworrenen Wissens hatte ich im Hirn zusammengehäuft; jetzt konnte ich Ordnung darein bringen und that es nach Kräften. Ohne Bekannte u. Freunde in der großen Stadt war ich vollständig auf mich selbst beschränkt u. bildete mir in dem Getümmel eine eigene Welt." Raabe, BA, Erg. 2 : 66. Furthermore, Raabe was also personally acquainted with Friedrich Theodor Vischer in Stuttgart, and their acquaintance has a history beyond the strictly artistic realm. The two harbored diametrically opposed views on the relation of the south German states to Prussia and the role of Prussia in a unified Germany. Aside from their political differences, Vischer is also reported to have insulted Raabe's wife Bertha over dinner, mocking her Braunschweig accent and Raabe is said to have found

In the process of compartmentalizing space in the course of the Vogelsang's urbanization "nature" becomes increasingly relegated to the Osterberg. As the closest thing to sublime nature left in the area the hill exists in Karl's imagination as a site of poetic transcendence, while its name specifically evokes the notion of transfiguration through its biblical connotations. Karl connects it to the poetic realist project when he describes the hill as the "wirkliche Idealität von Zeit und Raum" ("true ideal state of time and place"):[379] the hill has material reality while also being a site of the ideal. But as in other ecosocial spaces in the novel, and in Raabe's fiction generally, its poetic character is undercut to the extent that prosaic social relations have inscribed themselves onto the space. In a pivotal scene of the novel Karl, Velten, and Helene are all on the Osterberg during a meteor shower making wishes for their futures. Karl insists that they are "im tiefsten Frieden der Natur" ("in [the deepest peace] of nature").[380] But this ideal space is and always was the product of human labor:

> Der Wald war selbst damals schon dort oben von ziemlich wohlgehaltenen Pfaden durchschnitten, wie man heute in den Bädern als »Promenadenwege« kennt. Hier und da hatte sogar schon irgendein Naturliebhaber und Wohltäter der Menschheit eine Bank aufgestellt. . . .[381]
>
> The woods up there, even in those days, were crisscrossed by fairly well-maintained paths of the kind known today in resort towns as 'promenades.' Here and there some philanthropic nature lover had installed benches, most of them set back in the woods and bushes. . . .[382]

What Karl takes to be nature is the result of the dissonance between the social character of the

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Vischer "vain" and "unpleasant." Raabe, BA, Erg. 4 : 46, 171. While Raabe confirmed that Vischer held a low opinion of his wife's speech, he intimated in his letter to Karl Schönhardt of December 30, 1903 that the press had misrepresented his feelings about Vischer. See Raabe, BA, Erg. 4 : 46, 171 as well as Raabe, BA, Erg. 2 : 450. See also Horst Denkler, *Wilhelm Raabe: Legende , Leben, Literatur* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1989), 86–87 and Werner Fuld, *Wilhelm Raabe: Eine Biographie* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1993), 211–213.

379 Raabe, BA, 19 : 254. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 27.

380 Raabe, BA, 19 : 254. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 28.

381 Raabe, BA, 19 : 254-255.

382 Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 27.

environment that seeps into his text and his insistence on a mode of perception that instead admits only of the green surroundings. The environment's actual condition undercuts the "true ideal state." The paths not only mark the social character of that ecosocial space, but they reduce the moment of danger in sublime nature by making it both safe and comfortable for a "promenade." Nature on the Osterberg is imbued with a purposiveness that is reflected in the constitution of the space: it is the socially sanctioned space where one goes to experience, and to be seen experiencing, nature.

Aesthetic nature has here lost its aura in part on account of its social character, but also because the experience of being in the "true ideal of time and space" is already determined by the experience of the city. Ostensibly Karl, Velten, and Helene go up the hill that night in order to better experience the "Tears of St. Lawrence," a meteor shower that takes place around August 10th. But as Karl tells us,

> Die vereinzelten Sterne zählten nicht; nur die Lichter der Stadt in der Tiefe und die Gaslaternen ihrer Straßen und Plätze gaben einen bemerkenswerten Schein. Im fürstlichen Schloß schien »irgendwas los zu sein«, denn das leuchtete sogar sehr hell in die warme Sommernacht hinein und zu dem Osterberge empor.[383]
>
> The scattering of stars overhead didn't count; only the lights of the town down below and the gas lamps of its streets and squares shed a noticeable glow. In the ducal residence there appeared to be "something going on," for its lights shone quite brightly out into the warm summer night and up toward Easter Hill.[384]

With illumination technologies urban sprawl extends beyond the city's physical boundaries into spaces less dominated by the physical traces of modern social relations, such as the Osterberg and the night sky itself.[385] Karl ascends the Osterberg on that night expecting to have a sublime

[383] Raabe, BA, 19 : 255.
[384] Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 29.
[385] See also Wolfgang Schivelbusch's discussion of the way that artificial lights changed the culture of urban nightlife in *Lichtblicke: Zur Geschichte der künstlichen Helligkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1983), 1983 : 131–138.

experience watching a celestial event, only to have skyglow stymie the effect.

The aural experience is the second factor that undermines Karl's gesture at poetically transfiguring the Osterberg.

> Im Walde war es still; wildes Getier, das nächtlicherweile in ihm aufgewacht wäre und sich bemerkbar gemacht hätte, gab's nicht drin; die Fledermäuse, die ihre Kreise um uns zogen, zählten nicht; ihre weichen Fittiche störten den Frieden der Natur nicht. Nur vom Bahnhof her dann und wann das Pfeifen und Zischen einer Lokomotive, und aus den Bier- und Konzertgärten der letzte Wiener Walzer, der Einzugsmarsch aus dem Tannhäuser und der Hohenfriedberger harmonisch ineinaderdudelnd und den Abendfrieden hier oben wenig störend.[386]
>
> In the woods all was quiet. Wild animals that would have awakened to go audibly about their nocturnal business no longer lived there. The bats tracing circles around us were almost noiseless; their soft wings did not disturb nature's peace. Only now and then from the railroad station came the whistle and hissing of a locomotive, and from our three beer gardens the final Viennese waltz, the entrance march from *Tannhäuser*, and the "Hohenfriedberger" - all interwoven in a harmonious tootling and causing little disturbance to the evening's peace up here.[387]

While the section that follows this description consists mostly of conversation in which the differences and conflicts between Karl, Velten, and Helene are made clear, what undermines the "peace of nature" for Karl is not primarily the presence of the other two, even if they are "die beiden ärgsten Störenfriede des Vogelsangs" ("the two worst [peace disruptors] in all of the Birdsong").[388] Instead the reason is that there is neither "peace" nor "nature" to the "peace of nature." Even though the ascent of the Osterberg is figured as an escape from the social sphere of the Vogelsang, "aus dem Alltag in den Sonntag" ("out of the everyday into the Sunday"),[389] the sounds from the city penetrate up to the Osterberg. Second, stillness itself is yet another sign of human intervention misrecognized as "nature." Nature is noisy, and would be so here but for the

[386] Raabe, BA, 19 : 255.
[387] Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 28.
[388] Raabe, BA, 19 : 255. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 28, translation modified.
[389] Raabe, BA, 19 : 234. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 27.

fact that humans have driven off the other animal life on the hill. The "peace of nature" denotes an absence that Karl as a realist narrator cannot fail to draw our attention to, and is no more "natural" than the music and the industrial noise emanating from the city.

As with the mill in *Pfisters Mühle*, environmental transformation is more a qualitative change than a quantitative change as its social character becomes more pronounced. In the present, the Osterberg's aura as aesthetic nature is simply even more eroded than it had been on the evening of the meteor shower. Following Velten's return from the United States, he and Karl walk to the Schluderkopf, a wooded hillock by the Osterberg that formerly belonged to the neighbor Hartleben. The Schluderkopf is also the site of Velten's first major experience of failure, when Helene climbed too high in an old oak tree and he was unable to rescue her. By the time of this visit, however, the area around the Osterberg is now lively with people from the area enjoying a stroll. Karl notes:

> Der Weg war »planirt« worden, und wo der schöne, alte, morsche Baum seine Zweige über ihn gestreckt hatte, stand jetzt eine weiß gestrichene Zinkfigur, eine Nachbildung der Canovaschen Hebe, und daneben deutete an einem andern wohlgepflegten Pfade eine Hand auf einer Tafel nach einem »Asyl für Nervenkranke« dessen Aufblühen in seinem Waldbesitz am Schluderkopf Vater Hartleben glücklicherweise auch nicht mehr erlebt hatte und also auch nicht deshalb keine Ruhe in seinem Grabe zu haben brauchte.[390]
>
> The path had been ["leveled,"] and where the lovely old, decaying tree had once spread its branches over the path there now stood a white-painted metal statue, a reproduction of Canova's *Hebe*, and next to it, alongside another well-tended pathway, was a sign with a hand pointing the way to an "Asylum for the Mentally Ill," whose addition to the flora in his woodlot on Schluder Hill fortunately came too late for Papa Hartleben to see, and thus caused no disturbance of his rest in the grave.[391]

The leveled paths here only further remove the moment of danger from nature, and the presence

[390] Raabe, BA, 19 : 353-354.
[391] Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 90, translation modified.

of the asylum only capitalizes on the function that the Osterberg had in the past as a site of getaway into nature as opposed to life in the city.[392] The presence of the zinc copy of the sculpture of Hebe is another instance in the fusing of the ecological and the aesthetic, but also of their equal relegation as objects of leisure. The statue, furthermore, is a reminder of the changed status of art in modernity: it is a mass produced copy of an original, that is, a work of art now without its aura stands in an ecosocial space that itself is a product of modern prosaic social relations. Urbanites similarly consume the Vogelsang as an object of aesthetic pleasure. After watching Velten depart from the Vogelsang train station on his quest for Helene, Karl watches another train arrive and disgorge a mass of day-trippers, whom a local committee promptly greets with drinks while a local band strikes up a tune.[393] Through the gaze of the day-trippers the Vogelsang and the surrounding countryside together are reduced to a dichotomy of city and country at the moment when the "country" is looking ever more like the city. In their capacity as tourists, in other words, they are doing what Karl did when he ascended the Osterberg on the night of the meteor shower: going from the everyday sphere of production into the Sunday,[394] an experience that is dependent upon the very processes of modernization that are destroying the old Vogelsang. It is, after all, an industrial mode of conveyance that has opened up the entire area to easy tourist access. And just as the neighbors abet the destruction of "neighborhood" and the expansion of capital by selling off their property, so too do the locals abet the objectification of the area by supplying the day-

[392] Geisler pushes this reading of the asylum a step further. Noting that insofar as public opinion regards Velten as belonging in the insane asylum himself for his resistance to the compartmentalization of everyday life, the asylum is not for the mentally ill in a general sense, but rather is the result of a bourgeois division of life that "richtet sich selbst ein abgestecktes Territorium ein, das sie denen zuweist, die sich gegen solche Aufspaltung wehren." Geisler, "Abschied vom Herzensmuseum," 376.

[393] Raabe, BA, 19 : 312–313. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 64–65.

[394] "Eine grundlegende Entdeckung des 19. Jahrhunderts ist die, daß in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft nicht nur die Wochen, sondern die Wirklichkeit in Werk- und Sonntag zerfällt." Geisler, "Abschied vom Herzensmuseum," 366.

trippers with ready access to a bit of local flair from the moment they alight.

As the cultural landscape around the Vogelsang falls increasingly under the logic of industrial capitalism, the novel imagines the conditions of possibility for poesy no longer in a supposedly fresh and pure nature. Instead the outsider of modern prosaic relations is located inside, so to speak, in the novel's museal interiors. Frau Feucht's collection of Jena *Burschenschaft* memorabilia and the des Beaux museum of objects from the family's early modern Huguenot roots in southern France exist within Berlin at a moment when it has become the political and economic center of the German empire. The third private museum, the *Herzensmuseum* ("Museum of the Heart") that Velten's mother Amalia keeps, likewise is an alternative poetic space to the urbanizing environment of the Vogelsang. In spite of their designation, these museums stand in opposition to the kinds of institutions that evolved in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in conjunction with academic historism. Rather than fulfilling an educational program, they embody a kind of historical memory that is particular to their collectors, insofar as their meaning and coherency are determined by the collectors' personal biographies.[395] In this way they also stand outside of ideological projects of nationalist memory, as embodied in such 19th century historical monuments as Valhalla.[396] Nor are they oases for the learned, as Pircher characterizes the institution of the museum prior to the French Revolution.[397] Instead their oppositional character lies in their departure from the linear narrative of progress

[395] Katharina Grätz, *Musealer Historismus: Die Gegenwart des Vergangenen bei Stifter, Keller und Raabe* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006), 475.

[396] As Christoph Zeller argues, the aestheticization of collecting in the novel resists the ideological content of memory within historical studies, but remains dialectically associated with the larger political system. Christoph Zeller, "Magisches Museum: Aspekte des Sammelns in der Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 2005, 100–101.

[397] See Wolfgang Pircher, "Ein Raum in der Zeit: Bemerkungen zur Idee des Museums," *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 18, no. 67–68 (1987): 41–42.

and social mobility that is behind the social and spatial transformations the novel represents.[398] Feucht's collection preserves the memory of the romantic nationalism of the post-Napoleonic years and the *Burschenschaft* movement in the era of Bismarckian *Realpolitik*.[399] Like Feucht's museum, that of the des Beaux family is noticeably anachronistic, and is more explicitly at odds with external reality.[400] It is a "Phantasiestübchen," and a "historisch[es] Traumstübchen" ("fantasy chamber," "historical dream chamber").[401] But even if the museums can be read as the only oppositional spaces left when nature itself has been produced to serve dominant social interests in the novel, they at best only weakly resist the forces of functionalization. And ultimately the Berlin museums are subject to the forces of financial capital transforming urban and natural spaces outside. The des Beaux artifacts become mere decorations, and Krumhardt views them in terms of their exchange value, noting that they have "Kunstwert," and wondering on how many walls they will later hang.[402]

Velten's rebellion against property becomes a rebellion against the production of space generally and the production of nature particularly in the service of the political-economic order in Germany in the late nineteenth century. As Amalia, Velten's mother, tells Karl about her son's rebellion against the new bourgeois order, "auch die Illusion gehört eben zu seinen Mitteln, die

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[398] For an analysis of the mentality of social mobility and its connection to the novel's implicit reflection on the experience of time, see Göttsche, *Zeitreflexion und Zeitkritik im Werk Wilhelm Raabes*, 89–99.

[399] While it is difficult to map the events of the novel precisely onto a larger historical timeline, Krumhardt refers to Berlin as a "Millionenstadt." This would place Krumhardt's visit to the city sometime in the mid 1870s. Figures on the growth of Berlin in this period can be found in Matzerath, *Urbanisierung in Preußen, 1815-1914*, 396–397.

[400] Grätz places emphasis on this anachronistic character, which she sees as characterized by a reaction to the experience of temporal acceleration. The pace of change is consistently a concern in Raabe's narratives, and in *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* as elsewhere they effect a sort of temporal distortion, wherein acceleration makes the recent past appear as being impossibly distant. Katharina Grätz, "Kuriose Kulturhistorie: Raabes unzeitgemäßer Umgang mit einem zeitgenössischen Geschichtskonzept," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 2007, 58.

[401] Raabe, *BA*, 19 : 290, 294. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 49, 50.

[402] See Florian Krobb, "„kurios anders": Dekadenzmotive in Wilhelm Raabes „Die Akten des Vogelsangs"," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 2010, 119, and Geisler, "Abschied vom Herzensmuseum," 372.

Erde grün zu machen und schön zu erhalten" ("Illusion is just another of his ways to make the earth green and preserve its loveliness").[403] This comment comes at a critical moment in the novel, appearing as it does shortly before the news that Velten's pursuit of Helene has failed, after which Velten returns to his mother and assumes the role of *Komödiant*, in which he performs a sort of play as a means of preserving the illusion that house and garden are detached from the changes taking place without. Amalia's statement marks another critical moment in the novel's appropriation of "green" as a metaphor for the possibility of art and artistic production in a rapidly industrializing society, as it extends the concept now to the character of Velten as an aesthetic device.

Velten's project culminates in the burning of his family things and the opening of his house to plundering as part of what he calls an "äußerliches Aufräumen zu dem innerlichen" ("outward housecleaning to go along with the inner one").[404] This act destroys the last house of the "old" Vogelsang, completing the colonization of the neighborhood by capitalist relations and raising the question of whether enclaves of poesy are still possible anywhere anymore.[405] The plundering of the house brings Velten to an encounter at the edge of the human when he is approached by the ape-man German Fell. "The missing link" who performs in the local freak show, what makes the character puzzling is that he resists categorization within a Linnaean taxonomic system. He is called in the German an *Affenmensch* but also an *Affendarsteller*, which we might legitimately interpret as an actor who is an ape, but also as an actor who portrays an ape. He traverses the line between human and animal, now studying at Wittenberg, now the object of scientific examination, now a user of language who is able to explain Velten to Velten

[403] Raabe, BA, 19 : 302. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 58.
[404] Raabe, BA, 19 : 370. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 100.
[405] See Geisler, "Abschied vom Herzensmuseum," 376–378.

himself. German Fell and his fellow freak show performers clearly represent something other than the bourgeois human,[406] but whereas the others may disrupt normative conceptions of the "natural" through exceptional strength, fire-breathing, or this or that idiosyncratic ability, they only push the boundary of the human – to speak with Darwin they possess "a considerable deviation of structure in one part," "what are called monstrosities"[407] – while German Fell explodes the "natural" entirely. And he does so in a way that combines scientific fascination with aesthetic pleasure.

Fell is "von der Wissenschaft so lange und schmerzlich vermißten und endlich gefundenen Anthropomor[ph]"("the anthropomorph so long and sorely missed and now at last discovered by science").[408] He is a fantastical incarnation of nineteenth century debates over Darwinism whose crossover into the realm of the human happens when he "schien mit einem Male auf allen ihm von der Wissenschaft und den Herren Darwin, Häckel, Virchow, Waldeyer und so weiter auferlegten Wert verzichten zu wollen" ("seemed suddenly unwilling to acknowledge the great significance imposed on him by Messrs. Darwin, Haeckel, Virschow, Waldeyer, and the general scientific community.")[409] At issue in the novel and in the debate is the possibility of the "missing link." Rudolf Virchow argued that the absence of fossil evidence for what Ernst Haeckel called an ape-man meant that Darwinian theory could not be sustained.[410] As

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[406] Barbara Thums writes that the text leaves no room to doubt "daß [Veltens] Weltüberwindung in ihrer Radikalität die Grenzen des Humanen zu überschreiten droht. Veltens konsequenter Ausstieg aus dem Wertesystem der bürgerlichen „Menschenordnung," den sein Umgang mit den Dingen zur Anschauung bringt, macht ihn zu einem im Bezugssystem dieser Ordnung wertlosen Wesen, für das die Bezeichnung „Mensch" nicht mehr angemessen ist." Barbara Thums, "Vom Umgang mit Abfällen, Resten, und lebendingen Dingen in Erzählungen Wilhelm Raabes," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 2007, 68.

[407] Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 49.

[408] Raabe, BA, 19 : 377. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 104.

[409] Raabe, BA, 19 : 380. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 107.

[410] See Eberhard Rohse's account of the Haeckel-Virchow controversy in his essay "„Transzendentale Menschenkunde" im Zeichen des Affen: Raabes literarische Antwort auf die Darwinismusdebatte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1988, 208–209. For a discourse analysis of the scene, see Florian Krobb, *Erkundungen im Überseeischen: Wilhelm Raabe und die Füllung der Welt* (Würzburg:

the missing link, Fell is a fundamental disruption of the human as a discrete category and a reminder of the instability of such species distinctions.[411] The appearance of a missing link in the present, furthermore, raises a problem if we read Fell against the debates over Darwinism, because intermediate species are largely to be found only in the fossil record.[412] Being a living fossil, Fell brings the moment of biological kinship with the non-human out of the distant past and into the immediate present, collapsing the diachronic into the synchronic and reversing evolutionary time at the moment when the Vogelsang's own evolution from an idyllic settlement outside of the city to an anonymous industrial district completes itself. In doing so he also disrupts an evolutionary telos: not only does he mark the intrusion of the deep past into the present moment, but as a living intermediate species he contradicts any belief in the European human as the pinnacle of development.[413] Fell straddles an epistemological border between the real and the fantastic, real insofar as he is an object of objective study, fantastic in the empirical impossibility of a being such as himself. In his indeterminacy he ruptures both a normative conception of nature and the claim of realism as a normative representation of external reality that Krumhardt implicitly makes in opening his "file."

Fell's affinity with Velten is signaled by the shared morpheme in the name (*Fell* and *Vel*ten),[414] and he introduces himself as occupying the next branch over in Yggdrasil, the tree at

Königshausen und Neumann, 2009), 202–221.

411 Charles Darwin acknowledges the contingency of such distinctions in spite of general consensus in *On the Origin of Species*, 54.

412 Ibid., 159–165.

413 Krobb, *Erkundungen im Überseeischen*, 203–204.

414 In a novel in which character names consistently reflect something about the individual, the name "German Fell" remains puzzlingly ambiguous. In their explanatory notes the editors of the Braunschweig edition claim that the name is drawn from English, where "German" may mean "*leiblich*" (bodily) or perhaps "related," while "Fell," along with its German meaning of fur or hide, may be translated as "*Trübsinn*," "*Mißgestimmt*" ("melancholy" and "ill-humored," respectively). See Raabe, BA, 19 : 479. These translations, however, rely on archaic and obscure meanings of the English, and moreover do not seem to reveal much about Fell's function as a literary device. What is clear is that the name straddles the line between languages, and this has prompted alternative readings than that suggested by the editors of the Braunschweig edition. Jeffrey Sammons, for instance, says of

the center of creation in Norse mythology. “Man kann sich auf mehr als eine Art dran und drin verklettern” (“There is more than one way to misclimb up and into it, sir”) Fell says.[415] Yggdrasil is also associated with the tree on which Odin hanged himself, an act of self-sacrifice through which he obtained wisdom.[416] German Fell sees a similar transcendental promise in Velten, telling him that whenever he saw him he would say to himself “auch einmal wieder einer, der aus seiner Haut steigt, während die übrigen nur daraus fahren möchten!” (“here’s another one who [rises] out of his skin, while most people [simply fly out]”).[417] While *sich verklettern* can be reasonably translated as “to misclimb,” the Grimms' Dictionary defines it as climbing so high that one cannot get back, underscoring the condition of being stuck *on the way* to some sort of zenith.[418] To say that one has “misclimbed” is not to say that one has failed to rise beyond the confines of prosaic existence. Instead it places the subject in an ambiguous position with no way up and no way back.

This precarious non-transcendence hangs over the rest of the novel. Velten’s death at the end is the fulfillment of his desire to escape all property relations, but in contrast to Odin's arrival at wisdom, Velten's final days are marked by a regression, spent in the room he occupied as a

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the name, “'Fell' means 'hide' and thus refers to the animal-like quality of the figure. 'German' is the Russian form of 'Hermann.' Might this not suggest that he is both German and exotic, both inside and outside, straddling the realms of reality and imagination like so many of Raabe's figures?” Sammons, *Wilhelm Raabe: The Fiction of the Alternative Community*, 309. Most relevant for this context would be Florian Krobb’s reading: “Der Name „German Fell“ ist natürlich als ironischer Kontrapunkt zu dem gewählt, was der Künstler vorstellt: während er, nach den Theorien der Zeitgenössischen Evolutionslehre, das erste und niedrigste Glied der menschlichen Entwicklungsgeschichte, den Übergang vom Primaten zum Menschen, demonstrieren soll, weist sein Künstlername auf den vermeintlichen Gipfel der Evolution hin, den Europäer in seiner Inkarnation als „deutsche Haut.” Such an interpretation of the name also harkens back to the appearance vs. essence problematic raised in the novel’s epigraph. Krobb, *Erkundungen im Überseeischen*, 206. Krobb also sees the name “Fell” as a moment of intertextuality, borrowed from 1874/75 travelogue *Quer durch Afrika*, which further grounds the character in contemporary discourses about imperialism, race, and human evolution. *Ibid., 207.*

[415] Raabe, BA, 19 : 381. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 107.

[416] For an overview of the myths surrounding Yggdrasil, see John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 319–322.

[417] Raabe, BA, 19 : 381. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 107, translation modified.

[418] See “verklettern,” *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jakob und Wilhelm Grimm*, 1971.

student reading greasy copies of books he enjoyed as a child. Fell, too, whose pursuit of transzendentale Menschenkunde" ("transcendental study of humanity")[419] reverses his position from scientific object to subject in pursuit of knowledge, resumes his animal gait after taking leave of Velten. The aura of this unrealized transcendence is apparent to Krumhardt, who, when visiting the death chamber remarks,

> [Ich] empfand nichts von einer Befreiung von der Schwere des Erdendaseins in dieser Leere, sondern im Gegenteil den Druck der Materie schwerer denn je auf der Seele. Ich hätte freier geatmet im Staube, der aus hundert Fächern die Wände uns verenget, unter dem Trödel, der mit tausendfachem Tand in dieser Mottwenwelt uns dränget.[420]
>
> I had no sense of liberation from the burden of earthly existence in that emptiness; quite the opposite, I felt more than ever the weight of material things on my spirit. I could have breathed more freely in "the dust of a hundred towering shelves surrounding, the thousandfold gaudy junk of this moth-ridden world abounding."[421]

Karl's feeling of the heaviness of the material, then, is a sense both of Velten's inability to achieve transcendence beyond his body, beyond the species boundary, and beyond his class limitations more narrowly. Instead his status is closer to that of German Fell, as Barbara Thums has argued, an uncategorizable "leftover" between animal and human.[422]

This final station of Velten's project of maintaining illusion and thereby "keeping the earth green" leaves realism in an ambiguous place. On the one hand Velten's death would seem to be the ultimate collapse of the program of 1850s poetic realism. Eberhard Geisler, for one, draws this conclusion about the novel, arguing that Raabe here takes leave of a realist harmonization program that he himself held to. Geisler sees this as only a partial leave-taking, as

[419] Raabe, BA, 19 : 381. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 107.
[420] Raabe, BA, 19 : 400.
[421] Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 119.
[422] Thums, "Vom Umgang mit Abfällen, Resten, und lebendingen Dingen in Erzählungen Wilhelm Raabes," 69.

we can still detect in the novel traces of poetic realism's idealist agenda.[423] Geisler's argument sees in the novel a remainder of realist bad faith: the text knows of the untenability of its poetic position, but it still holds out hope anyway. But the void of Velten's death chamber is, as we saw with Stifter, not a wholly antithetical image to German poetic realism. Instead it is a site that exposes realism's double character as suspended between the material and the ideal. In an essay exploring the image of solitude in *Stopfkuchen* (*Stuffcake*, translated under the title *Tubby Schaumann*) and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* Hans Schomerus argues that Velten's retreat and solitary death were his ultimate victory over the world, because in dying like the castaway in the poem *Salas y Gomez*, Velten achieves a kind of invincibility from the shifting world outside.[424] That is, even though his regression to the room he occupied as a student would seem to indicate a defeat, his death can be seen as the success of the *Lebensentwurf* to which he had dedicated himself. Part of this transcendence involves the realization of the dispassionate state expressed in the lines from Goethe's "Ode to Behrisch" he carries around with him on a scrap of paper torn out of a book.

> Sei gefühllos!
> Ein leichtbewegtes Herz
> Ist ein elend Gut
> Auf der wankenden Erde.[425]
>
> Be without feeling!
> An easily moved heart
> Is a miserable possession
> On the wobbling earth.[426]

[423] Geisler writes, "Freilich bedeutet dies nicht, daß die „Akten" vollständig frei wären von dem, was in ihnen als Lüge enthüllt wird. Es lassen sich durchaus noch Spuren eines gewissen verbliebenen weltanschaulichen Harmonisierungsbedürfnisses ausmachen." Geisler, "Abschied vom Herzensmuseum," 378.
[424] Hans Schomerus, "Salas y Gomez und die rote Schanze: Von der Einsamkeit des Menschen," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft*, 1968, 43.
[425] Raabe, BA, 19 : 357.
[426] Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 97.

As Joachim Müller has pointed out, the verses appear more as a contrast to Velten's interior self: he carries the lines around on a piece of paper, like a kind of talisman, after he realizes that he has lost Helene for good.[427] Its existence points on the one hand to the impossibility of aesthetic autonomy of the kind that is a cornerstone to the transfiguration postulate of programmatic realism.[428] It is significant that Velten does not simply to cling to the verses, but clings to the paper on which the verses are printed, that is, the aesthetic object here is and remains a material thing.

And indeed, even though Velten would seem to have overcome material things when he set his property alight, his aesthetic self-representation ends entirely on the side of the material: in addition to the poem, he reads the books he enjoyed as a child. But he patently refuses new copies. Instead he reads from "den alten, schmierigen, ekligen zerrissenen Bänden" ("disgusting old soiled, tattered books from ages ago").[429] Whereas the dirt on Ebert's manuscript actually preserved the realist text's referential aspect, in Velten's death chamber it simply accentuates the material that weighs down on Karl's soul. The empty chamber is an image for the void that constitutes the negative side of the realist program. This is not a break in realism, but a continuity. First, the persistence of the material is the persistence of the realia, that is, the poetic project remains determined by material reality. Second, the negative side of the realist project is

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[427] Joachim Müller, "Das Zitat im epischen Gefüge: Die Goethe-Verse in Raabes Erzählung »Die Akten des Vogelsangs«," in *Raabe in neuer Sicht*, ed. Hermann Helmers (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1968), 281–282.

[428] "Aesthetic representation no longer compensates for the rift between consciouness and life, because the sphere of the aesthetic is no longer autonomous. The integrity of aesthetic experience is destroyed by the very advance of self-conscious historical knowledge for which the idea of aesthetic autonomy is supposed to compensate. The Goethean verse, which Velten chalks on the wall of his death room, therefore defines his being most completely when he describes it as a curiosity of literary history. Because it no longer compensates for the negation of his being, Velten's aesthetic self-representation comes to express that negation more radically than ever before. At the same time, it reveals what that negation really means: the rejection not only of a particular kind of human community, but of humanity itself." Walker, *The Truth of Realism*, 113.

[429] Raabe, BA, 19 : 394. Raabe, *The Birdsong Papers*, 115.

not new, at least not in practice. It is the particular expression of a constitutive aspect of the realist program that Raabe, like Stifter, consistently signposts.

The return of materiality in both *Pfisters Mühle* and *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* is the major consequence both aesthetically and physically of the expansion of a system of capitalist production, consumption, and disposal. The problem of the material is the same problem we find in Raabe's letter during Braunschweig's water calamity of January 1891: the deleterious effects of industrialization cannot be confined to industrial quarters, but instead assert themselves in a radical way everywhere. But to say that these two novels critically reflect on the poetic realist project is not to say that they ultimately reject poetic realism's legacy. Ebert Pfister's story ends with him enjoying a landscape in spite of the unfolding environmental catastrophe, while Karl simply terminates his text on what happens to be beautiful, green spring day. What remains instead is a self-reflexive openness that does not cancel out earlier realist theory, but instead draws on it to develop the texts' own critical edge.

CHAPTER 3
Towards a Poetics of the Anthropocene in Theodor Fontane's *Der Stechlin*

In the previous two chapters on Adalbert Stifter and Wilhelm Raabe, the human transformation of the environment was critical both for the actual conditions of living in the spaces that each author represents, and from there decisive for each author's own realism. But for each author, environment is a matter of *local* ecosocial conditions. The transformation of the Puszta in *Brigitta* or the degradation of the creek in *Pfisters Mühle* are local expressions of global historical processes, but they still reproduce a division between human and natural history that is no longer tenable in the Anthropocene.[430] John Lyon has argued, "in the latter half of the nineteenth century, place lost its significance, that its value during this epoch was a product of its threatened status."[431] In the Anthropocene the human production of the environment is a global reality, one where particular places, and the forces that constitute them, exist within the framework of more global processes. Human activity constitutes the global environment as a unit; it is not just a patchwork of local changes. This is hardly a shortcoming on the parts of Stifter and Raabe, and we should not misconstrue the sense of place as evidence that German realists were unconcerned with the realities emerging in modern Europe and the world. While part of my argument will be that Theodor Fontane captures the emergence of a global Anthropocene reality, he is not to be privileged over the other two authors for intuiting in the nineteenth century a concept that would only be named in the twenty-first.

My thesis is that Theodor Fontane's last finished novel *Der Stechlin* (*The Stechlin*, 1898) scales up the imagination of ecosocial transformation from the level of the local to the global,

[430] On the historiographic stakes of the Anthropocene see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009): 197–222.
[431] Lyon, *Out of Place*, 18.

and that this has the paradoxical effect of destabilizing a static notion of place, a destabilization that surprisingly constitutes the poetic status of Stechlin and the county of Ruppin as a place. Place emerges as a locus of poesy only because of an emerging global ecosocial reality that undermines the very notion of place. As we shall see, *Stechlin* takes as its point of departure a common opinion that Brandenburg, the region of Germany where the lake and the county of Ruppin are located, was always already resistant to poesis. The novel recasts the grounds for the conditions of possibility for poesy away from the enclaves within prosaic modern conditions that Friedrich Theodor Vischer imagined and instead sees it within the dialectic of social nature as a world-wide phenomenon, a scale for which the Anthropocene is a useful shorthand. Because the social production of nature is a point of departure for an engagement with nineteenth century German realist theory for Fontane as much as it was for Stifter and Raabe in the prior chapters, I also see this argument as continuing an engagement with the question of the conditions of possibility for poesy, an engagement that determines its place within the realist canon, even as its formal characteristics would seem to mark a departure from poetic realism as a critical discourse and as a mode of writing.[432] While rhetoric of connection and global systems might seem to fit into notions of wholeness or a totality of global being, the Anthropocene is also a challenge for environmental politics, especially where "place" is prized as an answer to an environmentally destructive globalization. Ursula Heise for instance argues, "Rather than focusing on the

[432] For an account of Fontane's "Stilpluralismus" and its affinities with aesthetic modernism see Choi Yun-Young, "Theodor Fontane als Zeitgenosse der Moderne. Die Problematik der Repräsentation," *Fontane Blätter* 70 (2000): 93–107. For an example of the end of realism thesis in the case of Fontane, see Russell Berman, "*Effi Briest* and the End of Realism," in *A Companion to German Realism: 1848-1900*, ed. Todd Kontje (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 339–364. For Berman *Effi Briest* "reviews the fundamental concerns of [realism's] aesthetic program, savoring it one last time, before announcing its conclusion." Ibid., 339. Eberhard Geisler puts forward a similar argument in his reading of Raabe's *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*, which appeared the same year as *Effi Briest.* Geisler writes, "Raabe sagt, mit anderen Worten, in den *Akten* der Hoffnung des poetischen Realismus ab, es könne realistisch geschrieben, d.h. auf die konkrete gesellschaftliche Realität eingegangen und dabei zugleich das eine oder andere Moment noch möglicher Poesie, d.h. einer gelungenen Lebenseinheit, aufgezeigt werden." Geisler, "Abschied vom Herzensmuseum," 337.

recuperation of a sense of place, environmentalism needs to foster an understanding of how a wide variety of both natural and cultural places and processes are connected and shape each other around the world, and how human impact affects and changes this connectedness."[433]

That the concept of the Anthropocene has much bearing on Theodor Fontane's realism is hardly a self-explanatory assertion. The thesis that human economic activity can impact the earth's systems to an extent that we can alter the planet is predicated on a science that begins with Svante Arrhenius' discovery of the greenhouse effect in 1896, when Fontane was beginning work on *Stechlin*.[434] Fontane, meanwhile, has generally been received as the author of the "kodifizierbare Wirklichkeit der guten Gesellschaft" ("codifiable reality of good society")[435] of societal determinism through "Gesellschafts-Etwas" ("the social something") of *Effi Briest*[436] for which the more-than-human world is of little literary concern.[437] But if an "environmental text" is a matter of where a text falls on a spectrum, rather than as an absolute category, as Lawrence Buell suggests,[438] then Fontane's apparent anthropocentrism is hardly sufficient grounds to

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[433] Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, 21.

[434] The history of the discoveries that led to global warming science is summarized in Mark Maslin, *Global Warming: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23–26.

[435] Klaus Scherpe, "Rettung der Kunst im Widerspruch von bürgerlicher Humanität und bourgeoiser Wirklichkeit: Theodor Fontanes vierfacher Roman „Der Stechlin"," in *Poesie der Demokratie: Literarische Widersprüche zur deutschen Wirklichkeit vom 18. zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1980), 231.

[436] Martin Swales, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Fontaneschen Realismus," in *Theodor Fontane*, ed. Heinz L. Arnold (München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1989), 1989 : 80–83.

[437] Jolles, "Weltstadt - Verlorene Nachbarschaft: Berlin-Bilder Raabes und Fontanes," 69. That Fontane is disinterested in nature, or even that the representation of nature is not one of Fontane's narrative strengths, is an argument that began with the first major study of Fontane, Conrad Wandrey's 1919 monograph *Theodor Fontane* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1919), and continues through Max Tau's 1928 study *Landschafts- und Ortsdarstellung Theodor Fontanes* (Oldenburg: Schulzesche Hofbuchdruckerei, 1928). Fritz Martini speaks of the powerlessness of nature in Fontane's psychologized "anthropozentrischen Sehen" in *Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus, 1848-1898*, 742. And in his canonical study of Fontane Peter Demetz argues that the concentration on the social entails a disinterest in nature: "Die Kehrseite der Konzentration auf die genau umrissene Bühne der Gesellschaft zeigt sich in dem traditionellen Desinteresse an der Natur, vielgestalten Landschaften, geheimen Zusammenhängen von Natur und Menschen." Peter Demetz, *Formen des Realismus: Theodor Fontane* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1964), 119. Kurt Weber likewise argues that nature description is significant only as a path to understanding the human characters in "»Au fond sind Bäume besser als Häuser«. Über Theodor Fontanes Naturdarstellung," *Fontane Blätter* 64 (1997): 141.

[438] See Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 7–8.

foreclose on an ecocritical reading of *Stechlin.* By approaching *Stechlin* from an ecocritical perspective I will not only show how Fontane's interest in the "Gesellschafts-Etwas" does not come at the expense of the material world, but I will also show how an author like Fontane gives us an opportunity to expand the boundaries of ecocriticism by bringing it to bear on texts outside of nature writing, as Kathleen Wallace and Karla Armbruster have called upon ecocriticism to do.[439] Furthermore, it is precisely because there is no sense of an "*Urlandschaft*"[440] that the more-than-human world becomes relevant for an understanding of the novel. To say that the realism of *Stechlin* is moving towards a poetics of the Anthropocene is to say that the social production of nature in the novel is an integral aspect of the global interconnectedness that the eponymous lake in the story comes to symbolize.

Der Stechlin is primarily a portrait of the German nobility at the end of the nineteenth century centered around a Junker family in the northern reaches of the March Brandenburg. Stechlin is the name of the family, the estate, the village, and a lake with the curious property that it responds to seismic events anywhere on the planet. Clues in the novel, such as the death of the Portuguese poet João de Deus, put the events around 1896.[441] While the novel contains almost no plot, its few events and lengthy conversations place us once again in a world in the throes of a political-economic realignment, even if that reality seems to register only obliquely. Fontane's own often cited summary of the novel from a draft letter to Adolf Hoffmann written in May or June of 1897 reads, "Zum Schluß stirbt ein Alter und zwei Junge heiraten sich;- das ist so

[439] Kathleen Wallace and Karla Armbruster, "Introduction: Why Go Beyond Nature Writing, and Where To?," in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 1–5.

[440] Richard Brinkmann, *Theodor Fontane: Über die Verbindlichkeit des Unverbindlichen* (München: P. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1967), 1967 : 20–21.

[441] Eda Sagarra gives a thorough account of how highly allusive *Stechlin* is to German society since 1871 and particularly in the mid-1890s. Eda Sagarra, "'Der Stechlin' (1898): History and Contemporary History in Theodor Fontane's Last Novel," *The Modern Language Review* 87, no. 1 (1992): 122–33.

ziemlich alles, was auf 500 Seiten geschieht" ("At the end an old man dies and two young people get married;- that is pretty much everything that happens in 500 pages").[442] Fontane is referring in the letter to the generational transition that takes place when the old Dubslav von Stechlin dies at the end of the novel, and his son Woldemar and new daughter-in-law Armgard assume residence in the manor. Their courtship and ultimate marriage is one of the few lines of plot that wends its way throughout the novel.

The implications of this generational change naturally run deeper than Fontane admits in this letter. In *Stechlin* the future of the Junker class is increasingly uncertain in the wake of shifting class dynamics under German industrialization. At the opening of the novel we learn that the Reichstag representative from the Rheinsberg-Wutz district has died, and in one of the few significant events in the story, Dubslav runs for the seat as a conservative candidate and loses to the Social Democrat Torgelow. Epochal historic change, however, registers mostly at the level of the trivial, as when the reactionary art professor and Giottonian epigone Cujacius equates the fact that paint now comes in tubes instead of bags as a sign of decadence and the apocalypse.[443] His reaction is only an extreme manifestation of the experience of the fin de siècle common to other characters. On the state of contemporary art he complains

> Nichts hält jetzt aus, und mit nächsten werden wir die Berühmtheiten nach Tagen zählen. Tizian entzückte noch mit hundert Jahren; wer jetzt fünf Jahre gemalt hat, ist altes Eisen.[444]
>
> Nothing holds out these days, and next thing you know we'll be counting those who are famous by days. Titian was still a delight after a hundred years. Nowadays anybody who's been painting for five years lands on the scrap heap.[445]

[442] Fontane, HFA, IV/4 : 650.
[443] Charlotte Jolles, "»Der Stechlin«: Fontanes Zaubersee," in *Fontane aus heutiger Sicht: Analysen und Interpretationen seines Werkes*, ed. Hugo Aust (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1980), 252.
[444] Theodor Fontane, *Große Brandenburger Ausgabe: Das erzählerische Werk* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1997), 17 : 282–284.
[445] Theodor Fontane, *The Stechlin* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1995), 200.

Cujacius connects the experience of destabilization to the artistic realm, and at the same time draws contemporary trends in aesthetic modernism into *Stechlin*'s narrative horizon. He clearly belongs at the more dogmatic and reactionary end of the spectrum along which Fontane situates his characters, but even so he serves to illuminate the circumstances of the changing reality the novel imagines.

To illustrate the relation between the translocal scale of the production of nature and the novel's poetological reflections we can turn to a key scene towards the end of the novel in chapter forty-four, towards the end of the novel. Dubslav von Stechlin has just been buried. After the funeral service, Melusine Barby and the Bavarian Baron and Baronness Berchtesgaden set off in a coach and observe the local scenery:

> So ging es eine schon in Kätzchen stehende Weidenallee hinunter, die beinahe geradlinig auf Gransee zuführte. Das Wetter war wunderschön; von der Kälte, die noch am Vormittag geherrscht hatte, zeigte sich nichts mehr; der Himmel war gleichmäßig grau, nur hier und da eine blaue Stelle. Der Rauch stand in der stillen Luft, die Spatzen quirilierten auf den Telegraphendrähten und aus dem Saatengrün stiegen die Lerchen auf. »Wie schön,« sagte Baron Berchtesgaden, »und dabei spricht man immer von der Dürftigkeit und Prosa dieser Gegenden.«[446]
>
> Thus they passed down the willow-lined boulevard already blooming with catkins leading in an almost straight line to Gransee. The weather was glorious. Of the cold prevailing in the morning, nothing more could be felt; the sky was an even gray, only here and there a spot of blue. Smoke hovered on the silent air and the sparrows chirped cheerfully on the telegraph wires. From the green fields of budding grain larks rose into the sky.
>
> "How beautiful," said Baron Berchtesgaden, "and yet you always hear talk of the unpoetic barrenness of these regions."[447]

Baron Berchtesgaden's realization that Brandenburg is something other than a land of "poetic barrenness" comes at the end of a description of a landscape that has been produced both by non-

[446] Fontane, *GBA-EW*, 17 : 453–454.
[447] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 323.

human “nature” (the weather, the birds) and the signs of human industry (the telegraph lines, smog, likely from the local glass industry, the road, but also the straight line of willows and the green fields). The scene is an image of the impossibility of a distinction between nature and culture, as non-human nature is contingent upon the social nature of human production. The telegraph wire and the curl of smoke are a synechdoche for the Anthropocene: the smog goes into the atmosphere, the glass enters global trade, and the telegraph allows for instant communication between distant places, collapsing a notion of nature built on simple contrast of nature versus culture. The scene is a case study of what Gernot Böhme calls the technical reproducibility of nature.[448] From the perspective of much mid-nineteenth century poetic realist theory, the fact that this landscape is an artifact of a prosaic set of capitalist social relations is what makes it resistant to poesy. The reason this is no longer the case in *Stechlin* is not that Fontane suddenly dismisses the problem by making telegraph poles and smog “poetic” after all; instead they represent a synthesis that in the novel and in Fontane's thinking about realism constitutes the “poetic.” In this scene, the synthesis is between the human and the more than human on the one hand and on the other between the local landscape and its global connectedness through natural and technological systems.

There is a second sense in which the scene is “poetic,” namely its function within the larger novellistic composition. In the case the of this scene, the gray sky and the willows both reflect the funereal occasion, while the blossoming catkins mirror the continuation of the trees through reproduction and so also anticipate the return of Woldemar and his new bride Armgard at the end of the novel. The point may seem obvious, but it is important in thinking about environmental representation for Fontane because as we shall see his thinking about realism

[448] Böhme, *Natürlich Natur*, 107–124.

privileges the process of poeticization in such a way that would invite a charge of anthropocentrism. The charge of anthropocentrism derives its justification not so much because of the inevitable distinction between the text and the world it represents,[449] but because the mimetic representation of the external world is assigned a place beneath the poetic imperative, at least in theory. But in practice Baron Berchtesgaden's statement is not just a realization that this environment is poetically valuable, but that there is no grounds for such a presumed anthropocentric hierarchy of poesy in the first place. His recognition of the conditions of possibility for poesy happenx through his encounter with the material world, not in spite of it. The importance of the environment in Fontane's poetics generally and in *Stechlin* specifically lies in what Lawrence Buell calls the "dual accountability to matter and to discursive mentation" in realism's environmental representation.[450]

The March Brandenburg is a poetic problem not because the spread of bourgeois capital has done away with an "old romantic country" of the kind Ebert mourns in the opening pages of

[449] Fontane's creative license with representing real-world places is well documented, these real-existing places ultimately are only loose models for the fictional worlds. See Ohl, *Bild und Wirklichkeit*, 207. In the case of *Stechlin*, the lake certainly exists, but there is no real-existing Stechlin manor, glass production in the area had ceased about fifteen years before the novel's narrative present, the village that bore the name "Stechlin" was abandoned by 1530. Heinz-Dieter Krausch, "Die natürliche Umwelt in Fontanes „Stechlin": Dichtung und Wirklichkeit," *Fontane Blätter* 1, no. 7 (1968): 345–348. Julius Petersen reports on a map of the physical lake with notes on how Fontane imagined its fictional counterpart. Fontane had imagined the manor as standing on the peninsula that juts out into the lake, before moving it to the south shore. Julius Petersen, "Fontanes Altersroman," *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 29 (1928): 20–21. Karla Müller interprets the location on the peninsula as symbolic of the novel's unification of apparent oppositions in single images Karla Müller, *Schloßgeschichten: Eine Studie zum Romanwerk Theodor Fontanes* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1986), 121–122. If we accept this interpretation, then it is further evidence of the priority of the epic concept over the literary reproduction of an externally existing reality. This holds true even though Fontane moved the manor to the south short of the lake, evidently in order to make room for the village and the straight road while maintaining consistency in the fictional world, as Petersen suggests. Petersen, "Fontanes Altersroman," 21. This move allows for a consistency in the fictional world that nonetheless upholds the poetic imperative, so that topography always constitutes what Gotthart Wunberg calls an "implizite Poetik" in his essay "Rondell und Poetensteig: Topographie und implizitie Poetik in Fontanes ›Stechlin‹," in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte. Festschrift für Richard Brinkmann*, ed. Jürgen Brummack et al. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1981), 471–473.

[450] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, 92.

Pfisters Mühle, but because Brandenburg never possessed such romantic qualities in the first place. Fontane explores the problem of Brandenburg's "poetic barrennness" in an 1862 essay on the Fehrbellin battlefield that appeared in the first two editions of the *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* (*Wanderings through the March Brandenburg*) before being cut from the third. Upon visiting the battlefield Fontane found a site that did not seem to reflect its historical significance in Prussian historical memory or German literature (his visit was occasioned by an encounter with an actress appearing in Heinrich von Kleists's *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*). The monument to the battle stood in an ordinary potato field, and instead of roses the only blossoms in sight were morning glories, yarrow, and bellflower.[451] Fontane's description of his encounter with the field thus dashes the expectation of a sublime encounter with a historically significant environment,[452] and his sojourn there prompts him to reflect on how the reality of the battlefield becomes symptomatic of a northern German culture that "des poetischen Schwunges entbehre" ("does without poetic drive").[453] The point of comparison is Bavaria, from which Baron Berchtesgaden hails, and the "poetic barrenness" judgment is explained as a deficit of both nature and culture.

> Es fehlt uns das Bunte der Kostüme und das Kulissenwerk einer Wald- und Bergnatur, und weil wir dieser Requisiten entbehren, mag bis zu einem gewissen Grade die Lust und die Fähigkeit in uns verkümmert sein, ein Schauspiel im großen Stile aufzuführen. Es fehlt uns außerdem die katholische Kirche, die große Lehrmeisterin der Festzüge und Prozessionen. Zugegeben das. Aber ein neues Volk, wie wir sind, dessen Traditionen über den Tag von Fehrbellin kaum hinausreichen, hat sich hierzulande eben alles abweichend von dem sonst üblichen gestaltet, und mit einem ganz neuen Lebensinhalt ist eine neue Art von

[451] Theodor Fontane, *Große Brandenburger Ausgabe: Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1997), 6 : 39–40.

[452] See Roland Berbig, "Fontane als literarischer Botschafter der brandenburgisch-preußischen Mark. Die Wanderungen-Aufsätze im Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser," in *»Geschichte und Geschichten aus der Mark Brandenburg«. Fontanes Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg im Kontext der europäischen Reiseliteratur*, ed. Hanna D. von Wolzogen (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 343–344.

[453] Fontane, GBA-WMB, 6 : 41.

> Volkspoesie, mit dieser Poesie aber eine neue Art von Volksfesten geschaffen worden. *Das Soldatische hat sich zum poetischen Inhalt unseres Volkslebens ausgebildet.*
>
> We lack the color of the costumes and the backdrop of a forest and mountain nature, and because we do without these stage props, the desire and ability to put on a show in high style may be withered in us to a certain extent. We also do not have the Catholic church, that great teacher of parades and processions. We admit all of that. But a new people such as we are, whose traditions barely extend beyond the day of the Battle of Fehrbellin, have done everything in a way that deviates from the norm, and thus we have created a new sort of poesy of the people with an entirely new thinking about life, and with this poesy a new sort of festival of the people has been created. *The soldierly has expanded to the poetic content of the life of the people.*[454]

On the cultural side, Brandenburg is prosaic because it cannot match the historical traditions of the German South, the Protestant Reformation having severed what could have become a line of historical continuity reaching back into the Middle Ages. On the natural side, the Brandenburg landscape lacks the "forest and mountain nature," the sublime aesthetic of the Alpine regions that informs many western ideas of nature since the Enlightenment and, it is worth adding, many conservation movements since the nineteenth century.[455]

The strategy in the essay is to blunt the force of the "poetic barrenness" charge by locating the "soldierly" within the Prussian people and their history, thereby contrasting political militarization with its own poeticization.[456] The argument is, admittedly, a troubling one. "Soldierly" does not refer to brute militarism for Fontane, but rather a people's reclamation of historical memory through their own historical practices, such as when they travel to the site of the Battle of Kunersdorf. But the militarism of the "soldierly" is not negated because it comes from below; indeed it may seem all the more disturbing when considered through the lens of

[454] Ibid., 6 : 41–42. Emphasis in original.
[455] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 73.
[456] Berbig, "Fontane als literarischer Botschafter der brandenburgisch-preußischen Mark. Die Wanderungen-Aufsätze im Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser," 343–344.

Germany's subsequent history. But I would like to put these problems aside and focus on the logic of the argument. On the surface it is the communal remembrance of military history that gives the Prussian people as legitimate a claim to poesy as the Oktoberfest does to the Bavarians,[457] but there is more to the essay than a mere assertion that Brandenburg has traditions and history, too. The "poetic content" of the Prussian people instead becomes apparent in the encounter with an environment etched with political history. The site of the Battle of Fehrbellin may be an otherwise unremarkable field in the Brandenburg countryside, but it becomes "poetic" in this sense because its poetic content is rooted in the material environment of the battlefield, the political history that is indelibly etched onto the environment, and in the fact that it is a traditional destination of Prussian pilgrimage. All of this makes up the space's ecosocial character. The material and social aspects that constitute the site become indistinguishable as they are subsumed into the poetic content Fontane claims for the March Brandenburg.

Fontane's solution to the problem of "poetic barrenness" in this essay from 1862 still relies on recovering the conditions of possibility for poesy in a notion of place as something stable: Brandenburg has as much poetic potential as Bavaria, it is merely differently constituted. The essays in the *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, in turn, are about bringing forth the poetics of place in the March. Although Fontane would not view the essays as employing a transfiguration aesthetic, on the grounds that they are essays and not works of art, transfiguration is ultimately how the essays relate to their subject matter: the cultural historical texts represent the people and the places in Brandenburg as to recover the poetic in a region that is not known for being especially aesthetically fertile. Genre questions aside, the project of the *Wanderungen* as a whole departs from a flight of fantasy on Fontane's part: in the preface to the first edition he

[457] Fontane, GBA-WMB, 6 : 42.

reports being on a boat in Loch Leven in Scotland and seeing "das in Lied und Sage vielgenannte Lochleven-Castle" ("Lochleven Castle, often mentioned in song and legend").[458] While beholding the romantic site the March Brandenburg rises before his mind's eye like a *fata morgana*, and it is this vision, he claims, that inspires the entire *Wanderungen*.

The transfiguration postulate holds considerable sway in Fontane's own thinking about art. It is the basis of his key statement on realism, his 1853 essay "Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848" ("Our Lyric and Epic Poesy since 1848"). As has been elsewhere emphasized, *Verklärung* here is not a question of willfully beautifying the object, but of a process that constitutes a fully realized work of art, a process in which art makes the actual meaning of reality visible, as opposed to its mere surface. In Fontane's view, the process of transfiguration makes the difference between realism and naïve mimesis because it gives the mimetic gesture a larger sensible substrate.[459] Fontane illustrates this point by comparing literary production with sculpture.

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[458] Ibid., 1 : 2.

[459] "Verklärung verlangt, daß im Gehalt des jeweiligen Werks ein konkretes Sinnsubtrat anschaulich wird." Hugo Aust, *Theodor Fontane: «Verklärung». Eine Untersuchung zum Ideengehalt seiner Werke* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974), 16. Richard Brinkmann characterizes transfiguration "als das Gegenteil von Einseitigkeit, Unsachlichkeit, Nicht-Objektivität, negativem Teilaspekt. . . . Verklärung bedeutet für Fontane nicht künstliche Verschönerung, rosigen Schimmer, Verharmlosung, Enttrivialisierung, sondern Transparentmachen der bloßen Tatsächlichkeit auf ihren menschlichen Gehalt hin, ihre humanen Möglichkeiten als Sein und Tun; die Faktizität als Schauplatz menschlicher Existenzformen und eines sittlich bedeutsamen Handelns." Brinkmann, *Theodor Fontane: Über die Verbindlichkeit des Unverbindlichen*, 40. Likewise Preisendanz writes, "Verklärung wird das genannt, was eine poetische Mimesis verbürgt, was sich mit Beobachtungsschärfe, Phrasenlosigkiet, bildnerischem Geschick verbinden muß; diese Verklärung gewährt, daß die dargestellte Wirklichkeit nicht in eins fällt mit dem, was auch für „das alltägliche Bewußtsein im prosaischen Leben" ist, daß die Kunst nicht zum Vehikel „anderweitiger Intentionen" wird," and stresses that "man darf also bei einer verklärenden Wiedergabe der Wirklichkeit nicht an ein euphorisches Verdrängen oder Ausklammern, an ein unredliches Beschönigen oder Vergolden denken. Selbst wenn Fontane den „verklärenden Schönheitsschleier" verlangt, so meint er wohl doch nicht ein verfälschendes Retuschieren des „Grinsezugs."" Wolfgang Preisendanz, *Humor als dichterische Einbildungskraft: Studien zur Erzählkunst des poetischen Realismus* (München: Eidos Verlag, 1963), 216. See also Ingrid Mittenzwei, "Theorie und Roman bei Theodor Fontane," in *Deutsche Romantheorien*, ed. Reinhold Grimm, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1968), 285. That *Verklärung* is by no means to be taken at face value is a key point of departure for Klaus Scherpe's essay Scherpe, "Rettung der Kunst im Widerspruch von bürgerlicher Humanität und bourgeoiser Wirklichkeit," 230.

> Das Leben ist doch immer nur der Marmorsteinbruch, der den Stoff zu unendlichen Bildwerken in sich trägt; sie schlummern darin, aber nur dem Auge des Geweihten sichtbar und nur durch seine Hand zu erwecken. Der Block an sich, nur herausgerissen aus einem größeren Ganzen, ist noch kein Kunstwerk, und dennoch haben wir die Erkenntnis als einen unbedingten Fortschritt zu begrüßen, daß es zunächst des Stoffes, oder sagen wir lieber des *Wirklichen*, zu allem künstlerischen Schaffen bedarf.
>
> Life is a marble quarry that contains the material for an endless number of images; they sleep inside and are only visible to the eye of the initiated and can only be brought to life through his hand. The block by itself, having merely been removed from a greater whole, is not yet a work of art, but nevertheless we can welcome as progress the recognition that the material, or better yet the *real*, requires artistic shaping.[460]

This is why poetic realism is a normative aesthetic concept for Fontane, one that differentiates works of art from other genres or from works that are not quite art or are not yet art, as is the case with the artistic output in Germany around the time of the 1848 revolution, Fontane alleges.

> Der Realismus in der Kunst ist so alt als die Kunst selbst, ja, noch mehr: *er ist die Kunst.* Unsere moderne Richtung ist nichts als eine Rückkehr auf den einzig richtigen Weg, die Wiedergenesung eines Kranken, die nicht ausbleiben konnte, solange sein Organismus noch überhaupt ein lebensfähiger war.
>
> Realism in art is as old as art itself, moreover *it is art.* The trend in our modern art is nothing but the return to the one true path, the recovery of a sick man that was unavoidable as long as he was still a viable organism.[461]

Fontane maintains this understanding of realism after he establishes himself as a novel writer with the 1878 appearance of *Vor dem Sturm.*[462] Transfiguration admittedly remains as vague a concept for Fontane as it does for other authors of the period.[463] Fontane singles out Christian Daniel Rauch's equestrian sculpture of Friedrich II as mimetic representation that is not yet transfigured, but why Rauch's sculpture is not an example of transfiguration is not elaborated upon. The argument rests instead on the claim that the sculpture appears at a moment in history

[460] Fontane, HFA, III/1 : 241, emphasis in original.
[461] Ibid., III/1 : 238.
[462] Mittenzwei, "Theorie und Roman bei Theodor Fontane," 280.
[463] Brinkmann, *Theodor Fontane: Über die Verbindlichkeit des Unverbindlichen*, 39.

when fully realized poetic realism is not the dominant artistic paradigm. But the example of the sculpture is more useful as an example of how transfiguration is imagined as a process and how that process differentiates the work from something that is simply a mimetic representation of something else. The poetic quality is achieved through the material, that is, realist art does not fall on one side of a spectrum between poesis and mimesis. The problem with the Rauch sculpture in the "Lyric and Epic Poesy" essay is that mimesis overwhelms poesis and exists instead for its own sake, the same problem Fontane sees in landscape in his 1872 essay on Willibald Alexis that I discussed in the introduction. Baron Berchtesgaden's realization of the poetics of the March Brandenburg, on the other hand, happens because the base material reality before him gestures to a larger reality not confined to the local context, that reality being an object-world dominated by its social character.

This brings us to the second distinction, that Fontane asserts the artistic concept over any claim to mimetically reproduce external reality.[464] Fontane's assertion of the poetic purpose over a realism that amounts to nothing more than verisimilitude is evident in his criticism of the early Turgenev. In a letter to his wife Emilie from Thale on June 24, 1881 Fontane writes:

> [Turgenjew] beobachtet alles wundervoll: Natur, Thier und Menschen, er hat so was von einem photographischen Apparat in Aug und Seele, aber die Reflexionszuthaten, besonders wenn sie nebenher auch noch poetisch wirken sollen, sind *nicht* auf der Höhe. . . . Ich bewundre die scharfe Beobachtung und das hohe Maaß phrasenloser, alle Kinkerlitzchen verschmähender Kunst, aber eigentlich langweilt es mich, weil es im Gegensatze zu den theils wirklich poetischen, theils wenigstens poetisch sein wollenden Jäger-Geschichten so grenzenlos prosaisch, so ganz *unverklärt* die Dinge wiedergiebt. Ohne diese

[464] For an exploration of how the mimetic representation of the object-world plays out in Fontane's fiction and for how it relates to late twentieth century debates over the status of reality, see Renate Böschenstein's essay "Fontane's Writing and the Problem of 'Reality' in Philosophy and Literature," in *Theodor Fontane and the European Context: Literature, Culture and Society in Prussia and Europe*, ed. Patricia Howe and Helen Chambers (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2001), 15–32. For an overview of first-wave ecocriticism's position in and reaction to these debates, see Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 3–13., for a critique see Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology*, 133–145.

> Verklärung giebt es aber keine eigentliche Kunst, auch dann nicht, wenn der Bildner in seinem bildnerischen Geschick ein wirklicher Künstler ist. Wer *so* beanlagt ist, muß *Essays* über Rußland schreiben, aber nicht Novellen. Abhandlungen haben ihr Gesetz und die Dichtung auch.
>
> [Turgenev] observes everything marvelously: nature, animals and people, he has something like a camera in his eye and in his soul. But the ingredients for reflection, even if they are supposed to have a poetic effect, are not at their zenith. . . . I admire his keen observation and the high artistic level that spurns clichés and fluff. But truthfully, it bores me because unlike the sometimes poetic, sometimes would-be poetic hunting stories it is so boundlessly prosaic, portraying things in a totally *untransfigured* manner. Without this transfiguration there is no true art, not even when the creator is a true artist in his creative skill. He who is so inclined ought to be writing e*ssays* about Russia, but not novellas. Essays have their rules and so too does poetry.[465]

Much as the technology of exact reproduction of a given scene challenges the status of visual art, so too does photography and the analogous techniques of precise description here ascribed to the essay demand an articulation of the artistic qualities that differentiate realism from naïve mimesis. Fontane's letter re-connects to the Willibald Alexis essay of nearly a decade earlier, in which he criticizes landscape description as being a dilettantish art that appears in little girl's notebooks. In 1872 the panorama and its literary equivalent are cited as artistically vacuous and "boring," here it is the essay's technical affinity with the camera that is prosaic and therefore boring for Fontane. This is not a condemnation of the portrayal of nature *per se*, indeed Fontane praises Turgenev's exactitude in observing and recording the exterior world. Instead the problem is that Turgenev offers prosaic essay writing in the guise of a novella. For Fontane the depiction of landscapes as an end unto itself is not bad art, but something *other* than art.

The Fehrbellin essay from the *Wanderungen*, as we saw, is interested in the aesthetic possibility of a space that does not seem to have any sort of aura about it, historical or otherwise.

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[465] Theodor Fontane, *Große Brandenburger Ausgabe: Der Ehebriefwechsel* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1997), 3 : 247–248.

In citing this essay, I do not mean to assign it a representative status for the *Wanderungen.* Instead I cite it to illustrate how the contrast between the aesthetic strategy at work there and the one at work in *Stechlin* address the March's supposed poetic barrenness. I have already pointed out that Fontane has a penchant for bringing together complex relations in the small detail.[466] But unlike Stifter, for whom the small testified to a reality above the human, part of what determines the Anthropocene poetics in *Stechlin* is that they refer to the global scale of social nature. Stifter's researcher looked for the more-than-human moral totality in the small things of nature, but in *Stechlin* that larger order would have a more strongly pronounced social character. Bronislaw Szerszynski observes that, "the truth of the Anthropocene is less about what humanity is doing, than the *traces* that humanity will leave behind."[467] My reading will demonstrate how a global ecosocial reality shines through the particular signs of the human production of nature. As was the case with the elements of the landscape that Baron Berchtesgaden found poetic after the funeral, these material traces stand in for larger sets of ecosocial relations that arise from but also transcend the particular historical circumstances of the characters. These values are associated with the poetic possibility of the March Brandenburg, as we shall see, but because they refer back to the global networks of capital and their impacts on the environment, for better or for worse they cannot be understood apart from the Anthropocene as imagined in *Stechlin.*[468]

Once more I would like to illustrate this constellation with a particularly significant

[466] Preisendanz, *Humor als dichterische Einbildungskraft: Studien zur Erzählkunst des poetischen Realismus*, 236.

[467] Bronislaw Szerszynski, "The End of the End of Nature: The Anthropocene and the Fate of the Human," *The Oxford Literary Review* 34, no. 2 (2012): 169. These traces amount to a "novel strata," a "category [that] may be regarded as both lithostratigraphical and biostratigraphical, for it comprises the built environment (a kind of trace fossil system in the making) that humans have created, particularly in urban areas." Jan Zalasiewicz et al., "Stratigraphy of the Anthropocene," *Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 369, no. 1938 (2011): B :1039.

[468] For an analysis of the image of globalization in the novel, see Marc Thuret, "Le charme discret de la mondialisation: Actualité du Stechlin," in *Identité(s) multiple(s)*, ed. Kerstin Hausbei and Alain Lattard (Paris: Presses Sorbonnes Nouvelle, 2008), 221–30. He argues that "*Le Stechlin* est en particulier, comme Fontane le signale lui-même d'entrée de jeu, le roman de la mondialisation." Ibid., 222–223.

moment in the text, in this case the trip that Woldemar von Stechlin, the Barbys, and the Berchtesgadens undertake by boat to the *Eierhäuschen* ("Egg Cottage"). The *Eierhäuschen* was a tavern in what is now the district of Treptow on the Spree River, and was a popular destination for daytrippers from Berlin. On the way up the river the characters regard the constructions along the banks of the river. Here, as elsewhere, it is not simply that where there once was "green" there now is "brown," but rather that we are presented with an ecosocial space that challenges classical divisions between human constructions and the more than human world.

> Jeder Bogen schuf den Rahmen für ein dahinter gelegenes Bild, das natürlich die Form einer Lunette hatte. Mauerwerk jeglicher Art, Schuppen, Zäune zogen in buntem Wechsel vorüber, aber in Front aller dieser bei Alltäglichkeit und der Arbeit dienenden Dinge zeigte sich immer wieder ein Stück Gartenland, darin ein paar verspätete Malven oder Sonnenblumen blühten. Erst als man die zweitfolgende Brücke passiert hatte, traten die Stadtbahnbögen so weit zurück, daß von einer Ufereinfassung nicht mehr die Rede sein konnte; statt ihrer aber wurden jetzt Wiesen und pappelbesetzte Wege sichtbar, und wo das Ufer kaiartig abfiel, lagen mit Sand beladene Kähne, große Zillen, aus deren Innerem eine baggerartige Vorrichtung die Kies- und Sandmassen in die dicht am Ufer hin etablierten Kalkgruben schüttete. Es waren dies die Berliner Mörtelwerke, die hier die Herrschaft behaupteten und das Uferbild bestimmten.[469]
>
> Every arch created a frame to the picture of what lay behind it, naturally in the form of a lunette. Masonry of every sort, along with sheds and fences, passed by in colorful variety. But in front of all these objects meant to serve the realms of the commonplace and labor, again and again could be seen bits of garden ground in which a few belated hollyhocks or sun flowers bloomed. Only after they had passed the second bridge did the Stadtbahn arches fall back, so that it was no longer possible to speak of the bank as having some sort of bordering. In its place, meadows and poplar-lined paths now appeared, and where the banks fell off as if to form a quay, sand-filled boats lay, heavy barges, from the innards of which a shovel-like machine dumped gravel and sand into the lime pits close to the edge of the bank. It was the Berlin Mortar Works which held sway here, determining the look of the river's edge.[470]

[469] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 164.
[470] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 114.

The signs of the human labor process are visible throughout: walls, chalk quarries, the gravel on the boats, and the mass transit system itself are all instances in which the environment has been transformed by and for industrial production. Instead of a movement out of the city, the ostensible purpose of a day-trip, the passage stages a reversal at the moment that the arches of the train tracks drop away. The second bridge would seem at first to delineate a border between city and country, because the train arches no longer determine the image. Instead the trees and fields dominate the scene, but this is merely a quantitative change of the bank's social character, rather than a passage into a nature that is qualitatively other than the city.[471] Beyond the city limits one reaches the mortar works, where the material is extracted from the land to be transformed into the materials for the city's physical expansion, extending the physical reach of the city beyond its legal boundaries. But what's more, the arches of the train tracks and especially the changes of the surface through the mortar works are examples of "significant anthropogenic deposits,"[472] novel phenomena that spread across a large area and will leave a layer in the lithosphere that a future geologist could conceivably identify. It is this trace on the rock that makes the Anthropocene a unit of *geological* time.

Together with the smoke that signals the presence of the Spindlersfeld factory later in the *Eierhäuschen* section and again of the glass factories later in the story, the novel shows here a specific instance of the global production of nature that grounds the hypothesis of the Anthropocene. Because of the prominence of the social character of the banks of the Spree, it might be tempting to see the gardens glimpsed through the arches as "mere pieces of greenery,

[471] Rolf Zuberbühler shows that historically factories along the Spree were already an eyesore for tourists travelling to the Egg Cottage in the 1890s in *Theodor Fontane: „Der Stechlin": Fontanes politischer Altersroman im Lichte der „Vossischen Zeitung" und weiterer zeitgenössischer Publizistik* (Berlin: Stapp Verlag, 2012), 146.

[472] Zalasiewicz et al., "Stratigraphy of the Anthropocene," B. 1039–1040.

the fruit and flowers they provide are few in number and late survivors; they are anomalies."[473] In this view, the gardens, the poplar trees, and the meadows are sites of the poetic, romantic in opposition to the arches as artifacts of the prosaic everyday, the mere reproduction of which Fontane dismissed in his 1853 essay as by itself insufficient for realism.[474] To be sure, the environment throughout is thoroughly subjugated, and the narrator sets the garden up as a poetic leftover when he contrasts it with the "objects meant to serve the realms of the commonplace and labor." The problem is that viewing the gardens and the patches of green as anomalies within an environment otherwise dominated by human construction ignores the unity of the image and opts instead for a segregation between the nature that continues as patches and the human trappings of modernity, with poesy relegated to leftover nature. But as with the scene of the birds on the telegraph wire after Dubslav's funeral, when Berchtesgaden comes to realize that Brandenburg is poetic after all, *Stechlin* does not really draw such easy distinctions. Instead organic nature and technically reproduced nature *together* determine the image of the environment in the text and together determine its imagination of the Anthropocene.

The time spent at the Egg Cottage has a similar ambivalence: the party has headed there to escape the city, but the day trip does not even offer the possibility of an escape from the "everyday" to the "Sunday," as Karl Krumhardt claimed to have it in *Die Akten des Vogelsangs*. After arriving at the Egg Cottage the party decides to take a walk "weil die wundervolle Frische dazu einlud" ("since the wonderful fresh air was so inviting").[475] The choice to put off the drink for the sake of a walk is a matter of taking the opportunity of a kind of aesthetic experience inherent to that particular environment. While enjoying the fresh air the party walks up to the

[473] Michael James White, *Space in Theodor Fontane's Works: Theme and Poetic Function* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2012), 141.
[474] Fontane, HFA, III/1 : 240.
[475] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 166. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 116.

Spindlersfeld factory, a massive industrial laundry facility in what is now Berlin-Köpenick (and the inspiration for Adam Asche and his factory in *Pfisters Mühle*). Before them they see the smokestacks releasing smog into the atmosphrere.

> An dem schon in der Dämmerung liegenden östlichen Horizont stiegen die Fabrikschornsteine von Spindlersfelde vor ihnen auf, und die Rauchfahnen zogen in langsamem Zuge durch die Luft. [476]
>
> On the eastern horizon, already filled with a twilight glow, the factory chimneys of Spindlersfelde rose up before them and long banners of smoke moved in slow puffs across the sky.[477]

The reaction of the party is markedly different to Ebert's reaction to the factory at the end of *Pfisters Mühle.* In Raabe's novel Ebert registered the slow motion ecological catastrophe coming out of the factory, but, like everyone else in the scene, continued to enjoy his outdoor activities *as if* the environmental apocalypse he were describing were not taking place. For the party in *Stechlin*, the appearance of the factory ends the expedition for fresh air. It is the furthest point of their walk, but it also prompts a discussion about industry as such. In some respects the scene resembles the "pastoral design" that for Leo Marx American authors inherit and develop from classical pastoral literature, a design that consists of an industrial "counterforce" that disrupts the bucolic and introduces into the text a "larger, more complicated order of experience."[478] Marx departs from the example of a train whistle in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Sleepy Hollow notes, and so identifies a pattern of "crude, masculine aggressiveness in contrast with the tender, feminine, and submissive attitudes traditionally attached to the landscape."[479] The opposite is the case with the appearance of Spindlersfeld. Possible phallic connotations of the chimneys notwithstanding,

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[476] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 167.
[477] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 116.
[478] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25.
[479] Ibid., 29.

the factory does not make a hypermasculine intrusion like the train in Leo Marx's example. Instead they simply materialize on the horizon. Their appearance is disruptive, but without inducing the kind of shock that even Ebert had when he approached Krickerode for the first time.

Stechlin imagines the global scale of the reality it depicts through the image of Lake Stechlin. The novel's opening situates the lake as the topographical centerpiece of a particular place.

> Im Norden der Grafschaft Ruppin, hart an der mecklenburgischen Grenze, zieht sich von dem Städtchen Gransee bis nach Rheinsberg hin (und noch darüber hinaus) eine mehrere Meilen lange Seeenkette durche eine menschenarme, nur hie und da mit ein paar alten Dörfern, sonst aber auschließlich mit Förstereien, Glas- und Teeröfen besetzte Waldung. Einer der Seeen, die diese Seeenkette bilden, heißt »der *Stechlin*«[480]

> In the northern part of the County of Ruppin, hard by the Mecklenburg border, through thinly settled woodlands, populated only here or there with a few old villages and otherwise nothing but foresters' lodges and glass or tar makers' kilns, runs a chain of lakes several miles long. These extend from the little town of Gransee as far as Rheinsberg and beyond. One of the lakes forming this chain bears the name "Stechlin."[481]

The focus here is on place as constituted through ecosocial synthesis. The glass and tar ovens are counted together with the trees and the water as an equally legitimate part of the cultural landscape, even though they are also sites of industrial production. The passage moves from a narratorial gaze over the region as a whole to a focalization on the lake, with the effect of relativizing the significance of the Stechlin even as it comes increasingly into view. And it is in this relativizing change in focus that the novel begins to unfold out of the lake a global ecosocial reality. The novel signals, for instance, that the lake is a part of the totality Melusine speaks of, signaled by the narrator when he says that it is that it is part of a chain of links, *one* of which is

[480] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 5.
[481] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 1.

called “Stechlin.”[482] The operative concept of totality is not a question of some absolute unity beyond the limits of everyday perception that the lake somehow makes visible, but instead a matter of dimension, where the general is not lost in the particular.[483] The lake's existence within a context beyond the immediate area only partially breaks through what might otherwise be a closed off unity.[484] Instead it is the fact that the lake exists as a central node within a mysterious subterranean network that opens it and the region up to a global context, one that determines the lake's ambivalent symbolic meanings.[485] The opening proceeds with a description of the beech trees, the reeds, and the rush around the lake, and then adds that

> . . .kein Kahn zieht seine Furchen, kein Vogel singt, und nur selten, daß ein Habicht drüber hinfliegt und seinen Schatten auf die Spiegelfäche wirft. Alles still hier. Und doch, von Zeit zu Zeit wird es an eben dieser Stelle lebendig. Das ist, wenn es weit draußen in der Welt, sei's auf Island, sei's auf Java, zu rollen und zu grollen beginnt oder gar der Aschenregen der hawaiischen Vulkane bis weit auf die Südsee hinausgetrieben wird. Dann regt sich's auch *hier*, und ein Wasserstrahl springt auf und sinkt wieder in die Tiefe. Das wissen alle, die den Stechlin umwohnen, und wenn sie davon sprechen, so setzen sie wohl auch hinzu: »Das mit dem Wasserstrahl, das ist nur das Kleine, das beinah Alltägliche; wenn's aber draußen was Großes giebt, wie vor hundert Jahren in Lissabon, dann brodelt's hier

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[482] Andreas Amberg writes that the lake “steht stellvertretend für eine ganze Seenkette, ein Band von Beziehungen, bildet einen Mikrokosmos im Makrokosmos. Der See ist nicht mehr Teil des Waldes, des festen organischen Elements, sondern Teil des umfassenden, metamorphorisierenden Elements Wasser und somit idealer Ausgangspunkt für ein beziehungsreiches Koordinatensystem, das leitmotivisch den Roman durchwirkt, strukturiert, freilich nicht immer an der Oberfläche, sondern, wie es sich für Wasser geziemt, in der Tiefenstruktur.” Andreas Amberg, “Poetik des Wassers: Theodor Fontanes „Stechlin“: Zur protagonistischen Funktion des See-Symbols,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 115, no. 4 (1996): 544.

[483] Walter Gebhard, *»Der Zusammenhang der Dinge«: Weltgleichnis und Naturverklärung im Totalitätsbewußtsein des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1984), 450, and Alan Bance, *Theodor Fontane: The Major Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 190.

[484] Klaus Scherpe, “Ort oder Raum?: Fontanes literarische Topographie,” in *Theodor Fontane am Ende des Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hanna D. von Wolzogen (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 2000 : 165.

[485] Here is where *Verklärung* gains its critical aspect in Fontane's late fiction. Being the novel's central symbol, the lake is the most obvious object of *Verklärung*. This is not so merely because the lake has global connections, but rather because the lake's ambivalent character makes it one of the more aesthetically resistant objects that the novel must negotiate. See Gebhard, *»Der Zusammenhang der Dinge«: Weltgleichnis und Naturverklärung im Totalitätsbewußtsein des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 465–466. On the ambivalence of the lake as a symbol, Müller-Seidel observes, “Dieser See ist ambivalent wie die Sozialdemokratie in der Möglichkeit des Menschlichen oder des Materiellen. Der Stechlin ist ein Bewahrer und ein Revolutionär zugleich.” Walter Müller-Seidel, “Fontane: Der Stechlin,” in *Der deutsche Roman: Vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Benno von Wiese, vol. 2 (Düsseldorf: August Bagel Verlag, 1963), 170.

> nicht bloß und sprudelt und strudelt, dann steigt statt des Wasserstrahls ein roter Hahn auf und kräht laut in die Lande hinein.«[486]
>
> . . . but not a single boat leaves its wake and no bird may be heard to sing. Only rarely does a hawk pass overhead to leave its shadow on the surface. Everything is silence here.
>
> And yet from time to time at this very spot things do get lively. That happens when far off in the outside world, perhaps on Iceland or in Java, a rumbling and thundering begins, or when the ash rain of the Hawaiian volcanoes is driven far out over the southern seas. Then things start to heaving at this spot too, and a waterspout erupts and then sinks down once more into the depths. All of those living around Lake Stechlin know of it and whenever they bring it up they're almost always likely to add, "That business about the water jet's hardly anything at all, practically an every day occurrence. But when something big's going on outside, like a hundred years ago in Lisbon, then the water doesn't just seethe and bubble and swirl around. Instead, when the likes of that happens, a red rooster comes up in place of the geyser and [crows into the countryside]."[487]

According to legend, this is so because the lake has "Weltbeziehungen, vornehme, geheimnisvolle Beziehungen" ("Connections with the world . . . high placed, mysterious connections"),[488] as Woldemar puts it later in the novel, such that the surface of the water is disturbed in response to seismic activity anywhere on the planet.[489] The global reaches into the local to disrupt the stillness of the lake and, by extension, the seeming timeless stillness of Ruppin.[490] The global scale that is a necessary ingredient of an Anthropocene poetics is thus

[486] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 5.

[487] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 1. Translation modified.

[488] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 158–159. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 111.

[489] Fontane has modified the legend of the red rooster from his report of it in the *Wanderungen.* There too the water of the lake was disturbed in response to seismic events elsewhere, but the red rooster rises when the fishermen cast their nets in the wrong places on the lake. Fontane, GBA-WMB, 1 : 349. Heinz-Dieter Krausch explains the red rooster phenomenon as being caused when fishing nets disturbed trapped pockets of methane released by decomposing organic matter that would then rise to the surface and be ignited by the fishermen's torches. Krausch, "Die natürliche Umwelt in Fontanes „Stechlin": Dichtung und Wirklichkeit," 345.

[490] Zuberbühler, *Theodor Fontane: „Der Stechlin": Fontanes politischer Altersroman im Lichte der „Vossischen Zeitung" und weiterer zeitgenössischer Publizistik*, 69. Joseph Vogl remarks that the lake is emblematic of Fontane's method of narration in *Stechlin.* "Ihr Prinzip ist die Korrespondenz; ihr Prinzip besteht darin, mit kleinen Ausschlägen und Irritationen ferne und große Ereignisse anzuzeigen. Die elementare Fragen jedenfalls – was passiert? was ist passiert? – scheint in Fontanes Texten auf ein Referenz- und Korrespondenzsystem zu verweisen, in dem sich Ereignisse und Begebenheiten als Reflex von Ereignissen und Begebenheiten manifestieren. Die Welt und ihre Bewegungen reichen maßstabsverkleinert in die Welt der Erzählung herein; und dabei lässt Fontane selbst keinen Zweifel, um welche Übertragung, um welches Prinzip und welches System von Beziehungen es hier geht." Joseph Vogl, "Telephon nach Java: Fontane," in *Realien des Realismus: Wissenschaft*

introduced with the lake. It is a material object in the topography of the March Brandenburg integrating it into a world beyond the local, which we know from Melusine's comments about the "great interrelatedness of things" is what lends the otherwise far-flung region of Ruppin its possibility for poeticiation. But the lake is introduced here as distanced from the human world and other animal life. It clearly represents the possibility of some sort of historical disruption, and the myth of the red rooster has frequently been interrogated for what it politically denotes.[491] But it nonetheless would seem to be qualitatively different from the more obvious instances of social nature that appear in the novel.

While the material traces of the human labor process stop at the shoreline, its symbolic status already collapses its apparent distance from the social world of the text. This is not simply so because Fontane, true to his statement about the function of landscape in his essay on Willibald Alexis, projects the novel's central values of newness and world-openness onto the lake, but because the characters themselves "read" this aspect of the topography in terms of terms of their immediate historical contexts. To read the lake as a symbol for revolution, as a model for history, as a given part of the environment that has something to teach, as Melusine will say, is to ascribe social meaning to the lake and thereby integrate it into the reality of the

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-*Technik - Medien in Theodor Fontanes Erzählprosa*, ed. Stephan Braese and Anne-Kathrin Reulecke (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2010), 119.

[491] Eric Miller points out the ambivalence of this color, that it is not necessarily progressive, and that if it is progressive, then it is not necessarily good. Eric Miller, "Die roten Faden des roten Hahns. Zu einem Motivkomplex im Stechlin," *Fontane Blätter* 67 (1999): 94. Hugo Aust also points out that in spite of the consistency of red as a pattern, it does not lead to any single, all-encompassing interpretation in Aust, *Theodor Fontane: «Verklärung». Eine Untersuchung zum Ideengehalt seiner Werke*, 308. Rolf Zuberbühler has demonstrated in his monograph on *Stechlin* that the repressive *Umsturzvorlage* of 1894 haunts Fontane's novel. "Der „Stechlin" ist Fontanes Antwort auf den Repressionskurs der Regierung, auf die Verhärtung der Fronten, auf den rückwärtsgewandten „neuesten Kurs."" Zuberbühler, *Theodor Fontane: „Der Stechlin": Fontanes politischer Altersroman im Lichte der „Vossischen Zeitung" und weiterer zeitgenössischer Publizistik*, 51–52. (51-52). For a reading of the novel against contemporary social history see Sagarra, "'Der Stechlin' (1898): History and Contemporary History in Theodor Fontane's Last Novel," 122–133. Sagarra historicizes the revolutionary symbolism in her book *Theodor Fontane: »Der Stechlin«* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1986), 66–77.

social milieu Fontane portrays. Müller-Seidel argues that because of the frequent personification of the lake, it is actually a social being, and because of this ambiguity in the lake's character he argues that we think of it in a more general sense as a "*Kunstgegenstand*" ("art object").[492] But the lake's integration into the social is only one side of its poetic function. In a study of Fontane's symbolism, Vincent Günther, following Goethe, argues that the lake is an "*altes Bild*" ("old image"). An *altes Bild* is a phenomenon that is not bound to any particular historical context, but rather occupies a layer of meaning that escapes the particular.[493] Thus the lake for Günther is nature because it allows the general to shine through *as* the general, without becoming bound to any particular meaning.[494] The act of interpretation focuses on the lake's mythic properties as an avenue to drawing the lake into the historical social realm. In spite of the lengthy description of the stillness at the opening of *Stechlin*, the narrator is more focused on the eruptive imagery of the myth. The legend of the rooster is a narrative telos, while the stillness is the condition of the lake *in anticipation of* the rising of the rooster. The same holds true for the characters, whose interest in the lake is focused on its seismographic attributes. This focus on the rooster comes at the expense of the lake's normal condition, and is reductive insofar as the myth is a vehicle for interpreting the lake implicitly or explicitly within the framework of the political constellations of Wilhelmine Germany. As Christine Renz argues, speech enters into the gap that the stillness creates, gives it an interpretation, and this is how the lake becomes a symbol in the first place.[495] But the lake escapes this reduction to a meaning specific to a social context. All of the interpretations either offered or hinted at do not entirely account for the lake's ineffable presence.

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[492] Walter Müller-Seidel, *Theodor Fontane: Soziale Romankunst in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1975), 451.

[493] Vincent Günther, *Das Symbol im erzählerischen Werk Fontanes* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1967), 23.

[494] Ibid., 98.

[495] Christine Renz, *Geglückte Rede: Zu Erzählstrukturen in Theodor Fontanes Effi Briest, Frau Jenny Treibel und Der Stechlin* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999), 132.

But if the lake's social character is largely a matter of interpretation and elevation to symbolic status through conversation, then as someone who contributes some of the most important utterances on the lake's meaning, Melusine is also one of the most important actors in loading the lake with symbolic significance. Melusine's affinity to the lake is a question of mirroring the lake's ecosocial character, expressed in the name she shares with the legendary water spirit.[496] Like her counterpart in Fontane's novella fragment *Oceane von Parceval*, Melusine in *Stechlin* is a character chronically unable to join with another, her relationships are always about distance, as Renate Schäfer argues in her study of Fontane's Melusine motif.[497] In chapter twenty-eight Melusine, Armgard, Woldemar, and Adelheid take a walk and look out at the lake. It is winter, a layer of ice and snow covers the lake, and Melusine admits that she finds the view disappointing, to which Dubslav responds that the layer of ice prevents her from imagining the spout of water, that "das Eis macht still und duckt das Revolutionäre" ("the ice makes everything silent and represses the revolutionary element").[498] Dubslav then suggests breaking open the ice "und der Hahn, wenn er nur sonst Lust hat, kommt aus seiner Tiefe herauf" ("and the cock, if he were to feel like it, might come up from those depths of his").[499] The red rooster appears here as an essence always lurking beneath the thin covering of the surface, a covering as impermanent as it is fragile, since the ice will melt in the spring, and the spring turns out to be the season of Dubslav's death and Woldemar's inheritance of the estate.

It is perhaps this reading of the lake that prompts Melusine's reaction. Melusine refuses to have the ice broken open, telling the company that she is superstitious and does not wish to see any interfering with the elemental. "Die Natur hat jetzt den See überdeckt; da werd' ich mich also

[496] For an overview of the history of this legend in general and in Fontane's own see GBA-EW, 17 : 471-477.
[497] Renate Schäfer, "Fontanes Melusine-Motiv," *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 56 (1962): 92.
[498] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 316. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 222–223.
[499] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 316. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 223.

hüten, irgend was ändern zu wollen. Ich würde glauben, eine Hand führe heraus und packte mich" ("Nature has covered over the lake for now and so I'll beware of wanting to change anything. I'd almost believe a hand might reach out and take hold of me").[500] Melusine fears the lake as a mythic force capable of taking revenge on humans for disturbing the integrity of nature. Renate Schäfer reads Melusine's fear in terms of her affinity to the elemental: the fear that the nymph has of being dragged down into her own realm, and at the same time Melusine's fear that the act of breaking the ice might also unsettle her uncanny non-human qualities.[501] The association does work at once to other both Melusine and nature and leads back to Fontane's fascination with the elemental in both nature and in human psychology.[502] Because Melusine has this affinity, she has been seen as posing an implicit threat to the human order, but her affinities with the non-human do not change the fact that she is one of the main characters who cast the lake as a historical artifact.[503] At the same time her fear of disturbing "the elemental" itself reifies both internal and external nature – external nature as a sovereign force "over there" in whose realm humans had better not trespass, internal nature as whatever exists within Melusine that can be isolated and categorized as "non-human." Melusine's own subject position is allied with the other social actors who inscribe the lake with meaning, symbolic or otherwise.[504]

During the walk Melsuine expresses a sort of holy dread of mythic nature, in chapter twenty-nine the fear of the mythic takes on historical social stakes. Her explanation turns into a broader consideration of the novel's "old" versus "new" problematic, while elevating the lake to

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[500] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 316. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 223.
[501] Schäfer, "Fontanes Melusine-Motiv," 95.
[502] Ohl, *Bild und Wirklichkeit*, 290.
[503] See Schäfer, "Fontanes Melusine-Motiv," 92 and Günther, *Das Symbol im erzählerischen Werk Fontanes*, 64.
[504] For this reason I would put less emphasis on Melusine's extra-social position than other interpreters have done. See for instance Amy Penrice, "Fractured Symbolism: Der Stechlin and The Golden Bowl," *Comparative Literature* 43, no. 4 (1991): 360–361.

a stand-in for the concept of totality at work in *Stechlin*. Melusine says:

> Ich habe mich dagegen gewehrt, als das Eis aufgeschlagen werden sollte, denn alles Eingreifen oder auch nur Einblicken in das, was sich verbirgt, erschreckt mich. Ich respektiere das Gegebene. Daneben aber freilich auch das Werdende, denn eben dies Werdende wird über kurz oder lang abermals ein Gegebenes sein. Alles Alte, soweit es Anspruch darauf hat, sollen wir lieben, aber für das Neue sollen wir recht eigentlich leben. Und vor allem sollen wir, wie der Stechlin uns lehrt, den großen Zusammenhang der Dinge nie vergessen. Sich abschließen, heißt sich einmauern, und sich einmauern ist Tod.[505]

> I was against the ice being broken, because any form of intrusion or even merely looking in on whatever keeps itself hidden, frightens me. I respect what's been passed down to us. Along with it, of course, what is emerging too, because the very thing that's emerging will sooner or later itself be something passed down. We should love everything that's old, as far as it has a claim to our respect, but it's for the new that we should really and truly live. And above all, as the Stechlin teaches us, never should we forget the great interrelatedness of things. To cut one's self off is to wall one's self in, and to wall one's self in is death.[506]

Melusine performs here a kind of transference, where her fear of the mythical element is generalized into a professed respect for the sovereign integrity of the given. The political implications imply a reformist agenda that rejects the various strands of reactionary conservatism that appear in the text, as well as a tacit acknowledgment of the intractability of the crisis of legitimacy facing the nobility at the end of the nineteenth century.[507] When Melusine speaks of "the great interrelatedness of things," she is positing a totality that is understood in social terms: totality in the form of the exists as part of the Brandenburg terrain while also teaching an ideal in contrast to the narrowness and provincialism of the people who, to speak with Dubslav, forget "daß hinterm Berge auch noch Leute wohnen" ("that there are people out there beyond the

[505] Fontane, GBA-EW, 320.
[506] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 226.
[507] For an account of this crisis as it pertains to *Stechlin*, see Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Theodor Fontane und der Standesroman: Konvention und Tendenz im Stechlin," in *Legitimationskrisen des deutschen Adels 1200-1900*, ed. Peter U. Hohendahl and Paul M. Lützeler (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1979), 266–269.For Hohendahl *Stechlin* is a *Standesroman* inasmuch as it fictionalizes the crisis against the backdrop of the spread of financial capital, industrial expansion, urbanization, etc. Ibid., 270–271.

mountains too").[508] But this symbolic inscription once again does not simply abstract away from the lake as a part of the physical terrain. The environment here is always already at the opposite end of a subject/object relationship, its alterity comes before the inscription of social significance. First Melusine fears the lake's mythical properties. The interpretation of the lake in social terms comes second.

It is the intersection of the global and the local within the lake that grounds its other various associations, and in turn informs the geographical imagination at work in *Stechlin.* The novel's geographical imagination is both intimately connected to the way that the external world is perceived and mediated through conversation, while also forming a key component of the image of nineteenth century globalization. The intersection of the global and the local repeats itself in the garden and around the estate. For instance, the lightning rod on the manor connects larger atmospheric forces to the grounds of the manor, and moreover it is evocative of the potential for sudden violent historical shifts that are otherwise implicit in the symbol of the lake and the legend of the red rooster. Most interesting are the two aloe plants (more accurately, *agave americana*) growing on his estate along with other "exotic" flora. The aloe are particularly emblematic of the regional/global problematic. One of the aloes is healthy and the other sick. What is remarkable about the sick aloe is that it is an instance of unintentional grafting. The wind at one point carried a seed from the swampy moat into the plant "und alljährlich schossen infolge davon aus der Mitte der schon angegelbten Aloeblätter die weiß und roten Dolden des Wasserliesch oder des Butomus umbellatus auf" ("And so every year, right in the midst of its already yellowed leaves, the white and red umbels of the flowering rush or *butomus umbellatus*

[508] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 137. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 95.

sprang up").[509] Furthermore it is this sick plant that gives joy to visitors, because they take the grafted plant for a growth of the aloe itself. What others perceive as a natural unity is in actuality a layered composite of global and local. The aloe with its graft is an organic phenomenon that is also a product of global trade and the accompanying history of European political hegemony over the Americas, and as such it is another instance of social nature in the novel: humans transported the plant from one continent to another and cultivated it in a region remote to both its native country and the centers of European capital.[510] The global and local composite in the sick aloe causes a perceptual disconnect: the grafting of the local rush onto the exotic aloe elevates the aesthetic status of the rush, but only because the rush is falsely taken to be exotic itself. The rush would not otherwise be an object of aesthetic appreciation if it were simply perceived on its own terms. At the same time the exotic plant onto which the rush is grafted is sickly, a circumstance that escapes the visitor intrigued by the plant's exoticism. The aesthetic elevation of both comes at the expense of the recognition of each.

For its centrality in the epic conception of the novel, the lake curiously is a simultaneous presence and absence, entering into conversation, if not into view, at key moments only to be left behind with the next change of subject.[511] At the same time, this fact alone reinforces the significance of the actual lake in a novel that works by a system of silence and suggestion, as subjects, thoughts, and observations enter into the surface of the causerie only to be cut off, dropped, or otherwise left undeveloped.[512] The dinner conversation in the novel's third chapter is

[509] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 7. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 3.

[510] The aloe plant in *Stechlin* had a real equivalent that grew outside of the palace in what is now Berlin-Köpenick in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For a history and an interpretation of the plant's function within the novel's poetic context, see Andreas Huck, "»Da ist nichts oberflächlich hingeworfen . . .«: Zu Genese und Funktion des Aloe-Motivs im *Stechlin*," *Fontane Blätter* 88 (2009): 154–157.

[511] See Henry Garland, *The Berlin Novels of Theodor Fontane* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 242.

[512] See Hans Dieter Zimmermann, "Was der Erzähler verschweigt: Zur politischen Konzeption von *Der Stechlin*," in *Theodor Fontane, am Ende des Jahrhunderts: Internationales Symposium des Theodor-Fontane-Archivs zum*

an important case study in the way that this system works in filtering the lake and its symbolic associations through the seemingly superficial discussion. At one end of the table, the conversation between Dubslav and Gundermann turns to the telegraph. The telegraph stands in both as a sign of technological change visible on the Brandenburg horizon as telegraph lines stretch across the landscape, and for the manner in which technological change determines human behavior. Dubslav observes that the brevity mandated by the form of the telegram has eroded language, so that, "Kürze soll eine Tugend sein, aber sich kurz fassen heißt meistens auch, sich grob fassen" ("Brevity's supposed to be a virtue, but saying things briefly usually means saying them coarsely").[513] The statement is a moment where language itself is the object of reflection, in content as much as in form (occurring as it does in a larger monologue about how the telegraph cheapens and commodifies linguistic expression).[514] But after Gundermann uses Dubslav's observation to repeat his jeremiad against the Social Democrats, Dubslav reverses himself in a moment of characteristic irony. Instead of the telegraph being a symptom of cultural decline, Dubslav expresses admiration for the progress that the telegraph embodies, if not outright endorsement.

> Schließlich ist es doch was Großes, diese Naturwissenschaften, dieser elektrische Strom, tipp, tipp, tipp, und wenn uns daran läge (aber uns liegt nichts daran), so könnten wir den Kaiser von China wissen lassen, daß wir hier versammelt sind und seiner gedacht haben. Und dabei diese merkwürdigen Verschiebungen in Zeit und Stunde. Beinahe komisch. Als Anno siebzig die Pariser Septemberrevolution ausbrach, wußte man's in Amerika drüben um ein paar Stunden früher, als die Revolution überhaupt da war.[515]

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100. Todestag Theodor Fontanes, 13.-17. September 1998 in Potsdam, ed. Hanna D. von Wolzogen (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 132.

513 Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 28. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 17.

514 Christian Grawe argues that the critical relation between speakers and their language distinguishes *Stechlin* from Fontane's prior novelistic output. Christian Grawe, *Sprache im Prosawerk: Beispiele von Goethe, Fontane, Thomas Mann, Bergengruen, Kleist und Johnson* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974), 53.

515 Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 29.

> When you get right down to it though, it really is a marvelous thing, this science business, this electric current. Tap, tap, tap and if we had a mind to (even though we don't), why we could let the Emperor of China know we've gotten together here and were thinking about him. And then all these odd mix-ups in time and hours. Almost comical. When the September Revolution broke out back in seventy in Paris, they knew about it over there in America a couple of hours before there even was a revolution.[516]

Dubslav's complaint about the telegraph, as we saw, was concerned with its effects on language. Although he speaks in favor of a notion of industrial progress, here his admiration for the sciences and technological innovation is less about technology as such and more about the telegraph's effect on spacetime. He imagines the telegraph in a way that resembles a tachyonic antitelephone, a hypothetical device capable of sending information faster than light and thereby causing a paradox of causality, in this case that the knowledge that a revolution *has* happened comes before the revolution itself even breaks out. The telegraph is a means by which human technology elevates the species to a global agent on two levels: first, as we have already seen, the technology relies on a physical network with a material trace in the environment, a material trace that becomes part of nature, as is the case with the birds on the wire at the moment Berchtesgaden has his realization about the possibility for poesy in Brandenburg. Second, the telegraph dissolves any sense of particular "place" by abolishing the distance in space and time between a region such as Ruppin and major historical events happening over the horizon. The technology of the telegraph produces, in other words, the possibility for the unfolding of a global history.[517] But this effect is not particularly new, following the mythology of Lake Stechlin, given

[516] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 18.

[517] "Der Chronotop des Telegraphen schafft also nicht nur »Weltverbindungen«, »Weltbeziehungen« und einen »großen Zusammenhang der Dinge«, in dem alles, was geschieht, hier wie dort gleichzeitig geschieht; er produziert auch Begebenheiten, in denen die Übertragung das Übertragene kassiert und ereignishaft wird: Das ist für Fontane etwa der kritische Fall überall dort, wo der telegraphische Verkehr – wie in der Emser Depesche und den Bismarckschen Telegrammen überhaupt – selbst Geschichte macht." Vogl, "Telephon nach Java: Fontane," 122.

that the lake's seismic interconnectedness already made the region responsive to natural events, which in turn produce human history (as in the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and its implications for the Enlightenment). The novel presents us with a communication technology and a topographical phenomenon whose similar functions harmonize with each other as to further upset any distinction between human and natural history.

While this affinity between the lake and the telegraph generate together an Anthropocene reality that makes up the novel's poetic project, they are also together caught up in a field of political associations that make them more ambivalent than liberal leaning characters like Woldemar and Melusine would make them seem. The possibility of sending a telegram to the emperor of China more explicitly articulates the imperial side of being open to the world and "the new" that Melusine espouses. The lake, after all, connects to Java, "mit Java telephoniert" ("has a telephone line direct to Java").[518] Through an affiliation of geographical proximity, both Java and the Emperor of China raise the specters of German colonial presence in Qingdao and New Guinea. The empire functions here as Edward Said argues it does elsewhere in nineteenth century European literature, as a "structure of attitude and reference," and "as a codified, if only marginally visible, presence in fiction."[519] In this case it is another important component of the novel's geographic imagination. Both the chthonic global connections of the lake and the technological connections created by the telegraph are physical manifestations of global networks of domination in the nineteenth century. This political ambivalence, as we shall see,

[518] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 64. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 43.

[519] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 63. Said also draws the comparison of the presence of empire to the presence of laborers. "To cite another intriguing analogue, imperial possessions are as usefully *there*, anonymous and collective, as the outcast populations . . . of transient workers, part-time employees, season artisans; their existence always counts, though their names and identities do not, they are profitable without being fully there." Ibid., 63–64. The analogy might also be applied to the notably marginal – albeit no less significant – absence of the glass workers at Globsow.

repeats itself elsewhere when the novel considers Brandenburg's place within global ecosocial constellations.

The conversation regarding the effects of the world-wide telegraph network introduces the subject of capitalist expansion explicitly into the novel's reflections on modernity and the Anthropocene.[520] Dubslav's conversation partner in the telegraph discussion is the reactionary Gundermann. Like Bertram Pfister in *Pfisters Mühle* he is in the milling business, but as owner of a chain of sawmills there is little in the way of *Mühlenromantik* about Gundermann. Where Pfister's mill was an anachronistic object that raised at most sentimental feelings in a narrator whose allegiances lay with the modern, Gundermann's chain of mills is as much a product of speculative capital as the factories Krickerode or Rhakopyrgos in *Pfisters Mühle*. Rex von Czako reports that Gundermann began with a single mill that grew to seven sawmills that now line the Rhin, a river in the Havel's watershed, and he has cornered the market on timber for Berlin's hardwood floors.[521] Gundermann has recently been elevated to the nobility, but he expresses throughout the dinner conversation a hardline stance against worker movements and anything that might hint of leftism. A bourgeois who has managed to break through into noble society, Gundermann is a negative foil for Dubslav,[522] completing the idealized image of the nobility as an alternative to revolutionary violence as well as the ideological intransigence of a feudalized bourgeoisie.[523] In his capacity as the owner of seven sawmills he is a mediator between the

[520] That the geological hypothesis of the Anthropocene forces us to see capitalist expansion and human species history together is one of the theses Dipesh Chakrabarty puts forward on climate change and history in "The Climate of History: Four Theses," 212–220.

[521] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 36. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 23.

[522] Sagarra, *Theodor Fontane: »Der Stechlin«*, 23. Müller-Seidel sees in Gundermann a comedy of contradiction that is evident in *Stechlin*'s large cast of marginal characters. Gundermann is "eine beispielhafte Verkörperung der Widersprüchlichkeit des Lebens, die zur Daseinslüge entartet." Müller-Seidel, "Fontane: Der Stechlin," 157–158.

[523] Peter Uwe Hohendahl has argued that "was Fontane an der adeligen Welt anzieht, was sie trotz wachsender Vorbehalte liebenswürdig macht (das Poetische), ist ihre Distanz gegenüber dem bürgerlichen Arbeitsethos." Hohendahl, "Theodor Fontane und der Standesroman," 279. By the time he was working on *Stechlin* Fontane

Brandenburg countryside and the city of Berlin, an agent for the commodification and consumption of the Brandenburg forest for the growing metropolis, and as much of a point of connection between the area and the world as the lake or the telegraph.[524]

Gundermann is another node in the novel's imagination of the global. His business pursuits, in addition to having a destructive effect on the local forests, dissolve local particularity of place in much the same way as the telegraph and the lake do. But the erosion of an aura of place as something singular and unique is not limited to a Brandenburg landscape subject to the forces of commodification. Arguably those same forces are more advanced in other places in

described the project more explicitly as an idealization of the nobility. In a letter to Carl Robert Lessing of June 8, 1896 he wrote "im Winter habe ich einen politischen Roman geschrieben (gegenüberstellung von Adel, wie er bei uns sein *sollte* und wie er *ist*)." Fontane, HFA IV/4 : 562. The aestheticization of the nobility against and over the bourgeoisie in *Stechlin* would seem to lend credence to Lukacs' famous charge of that Fontane's politics display a "gesellschaftlich notwendige Halbheit." Georg Lukács, "Der alte Fontane," in *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1953), 293. "So entsteht bei Fontane ein weiter Spielraum der Schwankungen mit äußerst verschwommenen Grenzen zwischen den Extremen: Bejahung der kapitalistischen Entwicklung und Abscheu vor dem Bourgeoistum, Vorliebe für den Adel und (zuweilen) klare Einsicht in seine historische Überlebtheit." Ibid., 273. In a letter to his mother Fontane wrote "wer den Adel abschaffen wollte, schaffte den letzten Rest von Poësie aus der Welt." Fontane, HFA IV/4 : 706. The publication of the letters to Georg Friedlaender in 1954 challenged the Lukacsian image of Fontane as someone whose view of the nobility was based on a division between a public and a private morality. On this subject see Helen Chambers, *The Changing Image of Theodor Fontane* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997), 19–20. In a letter to Friedlaender of May 29, 1890, for instance, Fontane writes "mit dem Adel hohen und niedren, bin ich fertig; er war zeitlebens in Gegenstand meiner Liebe, die auch noch da ist, aber einer unglücklichen Liebe." Fontane, HFA IV/4 : 47. As Inge Degehardt puts it, "In einer über die konkrete gesellschaftliche Zuständlichkeit hinausweisenden Rolle wird der Adel gleichsam enthistorisiert und zu einer literarischen Kunstfigur stilisiert, die es ermöglicht, gesellschaftliche Wertorientierungen mitteilbar zu machen. Sieht man den Adel in seiner (durchaus austauschbaren) Funktion als Spitze einer hierarchisch gegliederten Gesellschaft, dann wird verständlich, warum im *Stechlin* alle anderen gesellschaftlichen Gruppen nur aus der Perspektive des Adels dargestellt bzw. in ihrer Funktion auf den Adel ausgerichtet sind." Inge Degenhardt, "Ein Leben ohne Grinsezug?: Zum Verhältnis von sozialer Wirklichkeitsperspektive und ästhetischem Postulat in Fontanes »Stechlin«," in *Naturalismus / Ästhetizismus*, ed. Christa Bürger, Peter Bürger, and Jochen Schulte-Sasse (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), 198.

[524] The subject of logging comes up several times in the *Wanderungen.* Here, as in the case of Gundermann, logging is a moment of interpenetration of the city, global trade networks, and the Brandenburg countryside. The history of logging in the Menzer Forest around Lake Stechlin is recounted in the section on the region from the Wanderungen. Fontane, GBA-WMB 1 : 347. In the essay "Der Schwielow und seine Umgebungen" Fontane reports coming to an Acacia plantation near Petzow. The acacia is a non-native species that was originally planted to decorate parks, Fontane reports, only to prosper in the March so that now it is cultivated for wood and sent to be traded in port cities like Hamburg, Stade, and Bremerhaven. See Fontane GBA-WMB 3 : 418-419. The essay "Kolonie Zeuthensee" begins with a description of Hankel's Stowage (an important setting in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*), from which wood is exported to Berlin and the wider world. See Fontane, GBA-WMB 6 : 557-558. On Gundermann, the forest, and capitalist expansion see also Thuret, "Le charme discret de la mondialisation: Actualité du Stechlin," 229.

Germany and in Europe than they are in the Brandenburg countryside. The German speaking south, for instance, has also traded in on its local poetic aura in a process of commodification, as its regional products enter into the broader network of capital. "Art is not threatened solely in Prussia; it is in danger of losing its place in "German hearts" in general because capitalist modernity is fully capable of pentrating the no-longer pristine world of the south," as Russel Berman argues.[525] The role of capitalist economic relations in effecting a shift in the scale of human agency to the global appears in even such a seemingly small detail as the brands of beer consumed at different moments in the novel. While northern beer is not represented by any particular brand, the South is represented through two commercial brand names, Löwenbräu and Weihenstephaner. The late nineteenth century is also the moment when beer becomes a mass-market commodity and the production of beer is increasingly industrialized and bound up in the system of financial capital in the new empire. In 1872 Löwenbräu became the first Munich brewery to be publicly traded.[526] Beer spoils easily, and being a landlocked city that relied on an unreliable road network for trade, Munich breweries could only compete globally once they had access to rail.[527] When Baronness Berchtesgaden raises her glass at the Egg Cottage and states "daß man nur ein echtes Münchener überhaupt nur noch in Berlin tränke" ("one could drink a really genuine Munich beer only in Berlin"),[528] it is indicative that what is being consumed through the beer is the aura of the region. Regional identity and the poesy of the place is assumed to stick to a product that can now be mass produced for export. If the novel's operative notion of totality is about dimensions of global and local, then the beer makes tangible a reality that is not

[525] Berman, *The Rise of the Modern German Novel*, 10.
[526] Christian Schäder, "Münchner Brauindustrie 1871-1945: Die wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Entwicklung eines Industriezweiges" (Universität Regensburg, 1999), 76.
[527] Ibid., 164–173.For a broader history of the industrialization of beer production, see Ian Hornsey, *A History of Beer and Brewing* (Cambridge: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2003), 365–484.
[528] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 176. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 123.

immediately present in Melusine's reading of the lake in chapter twenty-nine, that is, that modern capitalism makes this totality present through modern processes of commodification and consumption, as much as it might be through the presence of the lake.

The erosion of a sense of place as something local and particular is, as was the case in the *Vogelsang*, advanced by the kind of mass tourism that the steam engine has made possible. In a one-sided conversation Adelheid holds with Dubslav on the latter's sick bed, she mentions one Berlin master mason Lebenius. Lebenius wants to found a resort in Wutz, a plan Adelheid finds objectionable for the number of lower class people from the city who will arrive with "Plieraugen," "squinty red eyes" because they are unaccustomed to the amount of light outside of the city.[529] This image of the urban tourist in the countryside also resonates with the rats in the Parisian sewers mentioned in chapter three, and is indicative of her desire to preserve her own space from the intrusion of urban populations. By the same measure she also realizes that the urban dwellers' diminished eyesight is something that the locals can capitalize on:

> Aber die grünen Wiesen sollen ja gut dafür sein und unser See soll Jod haben, freilich wenig, aber doch *so*, daß man's noch gerade finden kann.[530]
>
> But green meadows are supposed to be good for that, they say, and our lake's supposed to have iodine in it, not very much, of course, but just enough so that they are able to detect it.[531]

Her fear of the impoverished urban masses is countered with the thought that the meadows can be commodified for their light or the lake for its small iodine content. We see too that Adelheid's opposition to the founding of a resort around Lake Stechlin is, once again, a result of modern bourgeois capitalism. Much as the commodification of Lake Stechlin has the effect of reducing

[529] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 412. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 293.
[530] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 412.
[531] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 293.

the place to that object which offers the opportunity to be commodified, the trip to Italy in Adelheid's imagination becomes not about the country as a whole, but about sights for consumption.

In addition to trading in on its poetic aura by spreading its products through global networks of consumption, the south as a place is also eroded by mass tourism, as transportation technologies make it more easily accessible by people who paradoxically erode its poetic qualities in seeking those very qualities out. Count Barby at one point claims that travel in the era of the locomotive no longer even produces pleasure, let alone poesy, but instead is actively undertaken because of some external pressure. "[Ü]ber kurz oder lang wird man nur noch reisen, wie man in den Krieg zeiht oder in einen Luftballon steigt, bloß von Berufs wegen. Aber nicht um des Vegnügens willen" ("Sooner or later people will only travel the way one marches off to war or climbs aboard a balloon, merely because one's profession demands it").[532] Travel is rendered increasingly pointless because, "Das Beste vom Parthenon sieht man in London und das Beste von Pergamum in Berlin" (You can see the best of the Parthenon in London and the best of Pergamum in Berlin").[533] This circumstance, it should be noted, is made possible because of the financial and political power of the recently unified German state, which at the end of the nineteenth century is, for the first time, in a position to support large-scale archaeological expeditions. This paradox of modern tourism hangs over Armgard's letter to her sister from her Italian honeymoon with Woldemar, posing a challenge to her effort at representing certain stations of her journey, saying, "Von Rom zu schwärmen ist geschmacklos und überflüssig dazu, weil man an die Schwärmerei seiner Vorgänger doch nie heranreicht" ("Going into raptures

[532] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 365. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 258.
[533] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 365. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 258.

about Rome is in rather poor taste, and superfluous besides. After all, one never even comes close to the raptures of one's predecessors").[534] Her decision *not* to write about Rome runs deeper than a mere decision based on expediency with the letter form. Armgard remains enthusiastic about Rome, but she declines to speak about it under a sense of her own epigonality. Past writers of genuine stature have traveled to Rome and written about it in ways to which she cannot measure.

Since production and consumption under the sign of industrialism also constitute the "great interrelatedness of things," then environmental degradation has a place within that totality. Environmental destruction is discussed most explicitly in regards to the glass industry in the village of Globsow by Lake Stechlin. In chapter six Pastor Lorenzen laughs when Woldemar tells his father that even though he gets upset over the presence of glass manufacturing, it is good that so much local glass goes out into the world. Woldemar likes that the export of glass supposedly results in good working conditions and a local labor paradise where the workers never strike. Lorenzen laughs at Woldemar for this, but Dubslav takes Woldemar's side.

> Aber so viel noch von guter alter Zeit zu finden ist, so viel findet sich hier, in unsrer lieben alten Grafschaft. Und in dies Bild richtiger Gliederung, oder meinetwegen auch richtiger Unterordnung (denn ich erschrecke vor solchem Worte nicht), in dieses Bild des Friedens paßt mir diese ganze Globsower Retortenbläserei nicht hinein.[535]
>
> But as much of the good old days as can still be found in this world, can be found right here, right here in our dear old county. And as far as I go, into this picture of the right kind of organization, or if you like the right kind of subordination – I don't shy away from that sort of word either – into this picture of tranquillity, [sic] this whole Globsow retort-blowing factory doesn't fit.

The glass factory at Globsow does not fit because it is incongruent with the peace of the place

[534] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 400. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 284.
[535] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 78-79. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 52.

that the narrator evokes in the novel's opening, but also because it reveals the Stechlin to be anything but a marginal place given the ecosocial realities of global capitalism. Glass production is another link between Stechlin and a network of exchange relations spanning the planet, and like the connection through the telegraph wires it has the effect of collapsing distance. In the case of the glass products they, like the other commodities mentioned in the novel, enter into the global supply chain.

> Die schicken sie zunächst in andre Fabriken, und da destillieren sie flott drauf los und zwar allerhand schreckliches Zeug in diese grünen Ballons hinein: Salzsäure, Schwefelsäure, rauchende Salpetersäure. Das ist das schlimmste, die hat immer einen rotgelben Rauch, der einem gleich die Lunge anfrißt. Aber wenn einen der Rauch auch zufrieden läßt, jeder Tropfen brennt ein Loch, in Leinwand oder in Tuch, oder in Leder, überhaupt in alles; alles wird angebrannt und angeätzt. Das ist das Zeichen unsrer Zeit jetzt, ›angebrannt und angeätzt‹. Und wenn ich dann bedenke, daß meine Globsower da mitthun und ganz gemütlich die Werkzeuge liefern für die große Generalweltanbrennung, ja, hören Sie, meine Herren, das giebt mir einen Stich.[536]
>
> First off they send them to other factories and there they just go ahead as fast as they can distilling things right into these green balloons, all kinds of awful stuff as a matter of fact: hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, smoking nitrate acid. That's the worst one of all. It always has a reddish yellow smoke that eats right into your lungs.
>
> But even if that smoke leaves you in peace, every drop of it burns a hole, in linen, in cloth, in leather, anything at all. Everything gets scorched and corroded. That's the sign of our times these days. Scorched or corroded. And so when I consider that my Globsowers are going along with it, and as cheerfully as can be, providing the tools for the great universal world scorching, well then, let me tell you, gentlemen, that gives me a stitch of pain right here in my heart.[537]

The problem with glass balloons is first a matter of toxicity: they are receptacles for dangerous chemicals whose fumes damage the body and burn whatever materials they come into contact with. Here is another contradiction in Melusine's "interrelatedness of things." Totality, "the global," constitutes a network, and Globsow is a node in that network much like the lake. The

[536] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 365.
[537] Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 258.

network allows for the circulation of environmentally destructive agents and seems to extend everywhere. In spite of his stated distress over how the people in Globsow are contributing to a "great universal world scorching," Dubslav's sentiments about glass and their relation to the environment are as ambivalent as his feelings about the telegraph. After all, Dubslav does not mind the glass that makes up his wine bottles, and he has decorated his garden with a glass ball, a manufactured thing whose relation to the environment is to reproduce an *image* of a nature already cultivated through human labor.[538] On the other hand he removes the colored glass windows that his father installed in the viewing tower on the estate on the grounds that they do not allow for an unmediated gaze upon nature. "Ich empfand es aber wie 'ne Naturbeleidigung. Grün ist grün und Wald ist Wald" ("Seemed to me sort of an insult to nature though. Green is green and woods are woods").[539] He assumes a position for an encounter with nature (woods, and "green" more generally) that is undistorted by a medium that happens to be supplied by the local glass industry. In removing the glass, Dubslav is seeking to achieve a view of the external world that is not "colored" by local industry.

"The great universal world scorching" links a critique of the physical effect that chemicals have on people and the world to a conservative social critique of the process of industrialization, with the workers as co-conspirators in the damage. In equal measure "Generalweltanbrennung" is also a reference to the possibility of revolution, because the workers, including the glass makers in Globsow, are the subject of the speech, but more because industrial expansion means an expansion of the proletariat and an advance towards revolution.

[538] Like the lake, the ball brings together a number of apparent contradictions. Karla Müller points out the irony of an object manufactured by the Globsow workers, the novel's unseen agents of potential revolution, standing within the space of the palace. The irony is compounded, she also points out, when one imagines that it is in this object that the nobleman sees an image of himself. Müller, *Schloßgeschichten: Eine Studie zum Romanwerk Theodor Fontanes*, 119.

[539] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 63. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 41.

Read as a metaphor for revolution, Dubslav's worry that the proletariat will be unified *through* the centralization of capital on a trans-regional scale is a conservative reformulation of Karl Marx's prediction of the end of capitalism. For Marx at the end of volume one of *Capital*, "capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a natural process, its own negation. This is the negation of the negation."[540] Glass production thus brings together the processes of atmospheric and lithospheric transformation that enter into the novel in images such as smog or the excavation of mortar for urban expansion with the possibility of proletarian revolution. Natural and and human histories merge here because human economic activity is affecting the planet at a physical level while political and environmental transformations come together at the conceptual level.

For all of the causerie *around* the subject of historical change, the red rooster never rises, and the revolution does not come. On the contrary, the novel ends with what appears to be restoration: Woldemar grows weary of careerism, Armgard loses interest in urban life, and at the beginning of fall the couple takes up residence at the estate in Stechlin. The novel ends with Melusine's letter to Lorenzen on the eve of the couple's return. She writes, "Erinnern Sie sich bei der Gelegenheit unsres in den Weihnachtstagen geschlossenen Paktes: es ist nicht nötig, daß die Stechline weiterleben, aber es lebe *der Stechlin*" ("It is not necessary that the Stechlins live on forever, but long live *the Stechlin*").[541] The pact that the two had reached was that Lorenzen and Melusine would guide Woldemar and Armgard respectively through the inevitable historical changes to come. That historical change will almost certainly entail a waning of the nobility seems clear from Melusine's tone. That the family Stechlin are not necessary echoes Lorenzen's

[540] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin, 1990), 929.
[541] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 462. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 329.

assertion from chapter twenty-nine that in spite of what the nobility believes, the world will go on without them.[542] Instead of the continuity of the family, the Stechlins, Melusine affirms the continuity of *the* Stechlin, by which she means the lake. Melusine's letter is a tacit acknowledgment of the reality that remains unacknowledged in the more benign picture of respecting "the old" while being open to "the new" that she lays out in chapter twenty-nine. The source of the doubt over the family's continuity does not really come from the hint of a future without the family Stechlin, and, by extension, the Junker class. Lorenzen discusses such a future more explicitly in chapter twenty-nine than Melusine does here, suggesting that while James Watt and Siemens are the heroes of the modern age, "versucht es unser Regime, dem Niedersteigenden eine künstliche Hausse zu geben" ("our regime keeps trying to revive artificially something completely on the decline").[543]

The Junker class in Prussia has become a conservative anachronism because the contemporary moment is determined by industry and the inventions that make mass production possible. And while it is only through the lens of today's global warming science that Siemens and Watt appear as ciphers for the emergence of the Anthropocene, they are also connected to an Anthropocene reality in the novel to the extent that Lorenzen has in mind the global reach of the ecosocial reality that both have created. Nevertheless, the mention of the two figures here is not without an environmental context in a novel where we not only glimpse industrial smog, but in which the reality they represent is inscribed onto the environment. The letter, then, is a thinly-veiled denunciation of the illusory sense of continuity that comes from the newlyweds' return to the estate.[544] If Woldemar and Armgard's decision to return to Stechlin appears as a poorly

[542] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 324. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 228-229.
[543] Fontane, GBA-EW, 17 : 323. Fontane, *The Stechlin*, 228.
[544] See Thuret, "Le charme discret de la mondialisation: Actualité du Stechlin," 143. In draft versions Melusine casts stronger doubt on the continuity of the Stechlin family. "Aber trotzdem, die Frage des Fortbestandes der

developed turn in the plot, that is because the choice for the provincial estate over the bourgeois urban lifestyle is no more tenable than the integration of the Junker class into "the new" when they are clearly bound to tradition.[545]

What is ultimately at stake for the continuation of the Stechlins and the Junker class more generally is the unity between the family and the place that we saw at the beginning of the novel, when the narrator introduces the lake, the village, and the family all as having the same name. The lake stands in for the global, and the global is determined by industrial production, modern capitalist trade networks, the speed of telecommunications, industrial tourism, and the effects that these all have on the perceptible environment. Under this constellation, the Stechlins themselves are incidental, and so is the imagination of place as something remote, particular, and disconnected from larger ecosocial relations. But the possibility of such disconnected localism to be poetic was always already discredited in the novel, not in the least because its only advocates belong to the reactionary side of the novel's cast of characters.

The global scale of the ecosocial relations imagined in the novel does not unproblematically provide the conditions of possibility for poesy in the March Brandenburg. The novel does not explicitly decry environmental depredation, in fact nineteenth century notions of progress find a greater embrace with Fontane than they do in Wilhelm Raabe's late fiction. Part of the reason for this cautiously affirmative stance towards industrial modernity and the project of poeticizing the emerging Anthropocene reality is that the convergence of human and natural histories does not result in an "end of nature" paradigm. In the section on the Stechlin area in the

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Stechline beschäftigt mich wenig. Sind keine da, so sind andre da. Dies alles interessiert mich nicht. Mich interessiert nur, daß Leute da sind, die wissen, was in der Welt los ist. Mit andern Worten mich interessieren nicht die Stechline, mich interessiert blos – der Stechlin." Quoted in Petersen, "Fontanes Altersroman," 18.

[545] In the draft version of *Stechlin*, Fontane has a note to himself to devote only a few lines to the couple's return to the estate. The note is printed in Petersen, "Fontanes Altersroman," 18.

Wanderungen, for instance, Fontane tells of a forester who welcomed a study of the Menzer Forest for logging because he did not believe that humans could ever use up all of the wood in an entire forest for their own purposes. The subsequent history of the forest revealed his short-sightedness:

> Die betreffende Forstinspektion wurde beim Wort genommen und siehe da, ehe dreißig Jahre um waren, war die ganze Forst durch die Berliner Schornsteine geflogen. Was Teeröfen und Glashütten in alle Ewigkeit hinein nicht vermocht hätten, das hatte die Konsumkraft einer großen Stadt in weniger als einem Menschenalter geleistet.
>
> The respective authority was taken at his word, and lo and behold! Before thirty years had passed the entire forest had flown through Berlin's chimneys. One big city's power of consumption had accomplished in a human lifetime what tar ovens and glassworks had been unable to do in all of eternity.[546]

Fontane's ironic tone conveys something other than an ambivalence towards environmental depredation. The unbridled consumption of resources has a real and destructive impact in the present. But the view presented in this history of the Menzer Forest by Lake Stechlin is longer. The forest grows back after the Berliners switch to heating their homes with peat, but its history of exploitation is forever a part of its character. The human traces left on the planet, likewise determine what we call the Anthropocene and what the characters in the novel think of when they refer to the "new." They constitute a set of historical circumstances wherein the social is not so much relativized against the broader scale of natural history, but rather becomes elevated into the longer history of the earth.

[546] Fontane, GBA-WMB, 1 : 347.

CONCLUSION
Realism's Environmental Poetics

The environmental imagination at work in the authors and texts that I have examined in this dissertation not only anchors the texts in the material world thematically, but the texts' relation to environmental matters maintain a material immanence within a project of poetic realism. Their environmental character is distinct from referentiality as understood in ecocriticism: it is not that the text is oriented towards the material world, but that the material penetrates into realist aesthetics. In spite of transfiguration as a theory, German realism's attachment to materiality stretches beyond the environmental thematic into both the poetic project and into the level of poetological reflection.

Adalbert Stifter, as Walter Benjamin argued, cloaks his social moral imperatives in the guise of natural laws.[547] The social production of nature could be seen as the mediating instance between the human ethical world and Stifter's nature, and the author does invoke nature to lend normative force to a conservative and anti-revolutionary politics – his essays written after 1848 make that abundantly clear. But within the social production of nature we see a kind of chicken or the egg problematic: nature is an expression of moral order, the work done on nature makes that moral order visible, but it ultimately remains unclear whether what we see are the signs of an ethical structure to the universe that exists *a priori*, or if it is only a product of the human domination of nature (and therefore, whether it really signals a moral order at all). This is not simply some logical trap for Stifter. Instead it opens a gap that directly determines the ethical content of environmental transformation and the possibilities of realism more generally. Without

[547] See Benjamin's fragmentary essay on Stifter in the Gesammelte Schriften (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), II.2 : 609.

the assurance of such instances as the "gentle law," the "cheerful abyss," or the "chain of flowers," environmental transformation only has a grounding in social ends, social nature is not normative nature, and it becomes a matter of human domination over the non-human world. The gap is not an unfortunate blind spot or instance of realist bad faith, but rather an integral part of Stifter's poetics. In *Brigitta* especially its existence justifies the entire realist enterprise. From within Stifter's realism any doubts about the world-preserving that realism, like environmental transformation, is supposed to make visible would seem to arise from the inability of humans to know the totality, and so all doubt could be dismissed. But as we saw in *Abdias*, the existence of the higher instance is not always above question as the text itself foregrounds the limits to the seeming authority of the program. The consistent manner in which it views itself with skepticism and irony produces its dual nature, but moreover *Abdias* tantalizes us with a figure who appears to be beyond the subject/object, natural/human dualism that structures the poetic program.

In Raabe's realism the production of nature only frustrates the conditions of possibility for poesy. There is no possibility in *Pfisters Mühle* or *Die Akten des Vogelsangs* for countering the historical experience of urban and industrial sprawl with a more benign image of how environmental transformation could look in an unrealized, more moral state of existence, as was the case with Stifter. In both novels the ideal human condition can only be imagined in the past, in the mill garden prior to the moment when the stream was filled with hydrogen sulfide, or in the old Vogelsang, before green had given way to grey. The critical, reflective consciousness of the narrators in both texts is, on the one hand, a matter of dual allegiances, as has been pointed out before in the scholarship.[548] But the allegiances of Raabe's first person narrators are divided

[548] See for instance Hubert Ohl, "Der Bürger und das Unbedingte bei Wilhelm Raabe," *Irmgard Roebling, Wilhelm Raabes doppelte Buchführung: Paradigma einer Spaltung*, and Jeffrey Sammons, W*ilhelm Raabe: The Fiction of the Alternative Community*, 300–315, among others.

along the actual tensions within the environment at least as much as along social lines.

I have argued that Fontane's final published novel, *Der Stechlin*, moves towards a poetics of an emerging Anthropocene reality. The crucial difference here over Stifter and Raabe is that the aesthetic status of nature, and inherited realist notions of the autonomy of the works of art, are now problematized at a global scale, that is, they exist within a constellation of ecosocial relations that extends beyond the smaller scale imagination of place that still predominates over the first two. The global ecosocial reality resolves the problem of the supposed lack of poetic potential in the March Brandenburg, a lack that was intrinsic to the environment even without the history of exploiting the forest for timber or the smog from glass industries. But at the same time the inclusion of larger scale ecosocial relations within the poetic project loosens the unity of place that the novel begins with. This unity was of course always contingent upon social practices and conventions, and so this unity is likewise imaginary – the novel supplies us with enough facts about the history of the place to show that the notion of place has a thin empirical basis. The difference is instead that the Anthropocene reality crystallizing in the novel relocates the possibility of poesy away from the small scale and the local and into global networks of ecosocial activity. It is, then, an aspect of the political issue within the text of the crisis of legitimacy confronting the Prussian nobility at the end of the nineteenth century.[549]

My analysis in this dissertation has been largely a matter of investigating the way that tensions and internal contradictions in social nature feed into realist poetics, and how realist poetics determine the perception of the environment in the texts. The realist text's mimetic imperative opens the gate for the antinomies within the environment to enter into and muddy each author's realism as a process. The persistence of the material reality of ecosocial relations

[549] See Hohendahl, "Theodor Fontane und der Standesroman."

weighs down transfiguration in the present, although this would not have discredited the concept for the poetic realists themselves: Julian Schmidt sees the poesy of the material as being the principle of the future, Fontane sees the actual realist output of his age as being on the way to realism. It is a future that never comes, partly because of the historical irreversibility of the less than harmonious state of the real world in an era of bureaucratic and industrial domination of nature. But all of this does not amount to a failure of realism or even of the program of poetic realism. It is, instead, central to the reflective nature of the texts, indeed it enhances the self-reflective mode because of the friction that it gives the realist project. The critical, reflective mode of realism then is anchored in the materiality of the worlds the texts represent. These worlds are, of course, still fictional worlds presented as real. But these fictional worlds are imagined as having a materiality that the realist text can never credibly "*verklären.*"

I have avoided in my analysis explicit comment on whether the texts I have examined are especially "environmental." I have chosen not to raise this question directly partly because I agree that a nearly infinite range of texts could be open to an ecocritical reading, partly because what what counts as an "environmental text" depends upon one's own outlook on ecological politics, and partly because I see a critical dead-end in scrutinizing literary works for the extent to which they accord with the critic's environmental commitments. Nevertheless, my thesis throughout makes apparent that I do regard these texts are in some fashion "ecological," with some qualifications. It should be clear that none of the stories I have investigated here is interested in pursuing a vision that could be argued as being especially "ecocentric." Nor can we find in Stifter, Raabe, and Fontane much that could be mobilized for a contemporary environmental agenda. Raabe would be the closest, but reading him as an "ecological author"

still runs the risk of overdetermining the environmental thematic in his works and the plasticity of his descriptions of environmental depredation.

What this means is that the environmental imagination at work in the texts is only partially a matter of the texts' orientation *towards* the outside world. The evocation of places that are modeled to varying degrees on places that are real or could be real is here not what makes them environmental. It is instead the reach of the environment into the realist text in addition to (and I would even argue beyond) the extent to which the text directs its readership back to the earth. The environmental aspect is also a core aspect of the text's political content, and therefore also determines the political implications of each author's realism as such. From the perspective of many strands of contemporary environmentalism, this political content is at best ambiguous. The ambivalence towards, if not explicit embrace of, environmental transformation is precisely what deep ecology rejects, while the bourgeois political inflection that the texts place on the representation of the environment and environmental matters squares unevenly with an ecojustice agenda. But the manner in which nature intersects with a text's political outlook is not the sole criterion for what makes a text ecological. Instead the stories' horizons are a prism that refracts a particular moment in ecosocial history.

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