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Acknowledgments

Throughout the process of working on this project I have often found myself identifying with the speaker of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1920), who at a pivotal moment in the poem exclaims that "it is impossible to say just what I mean!" This is indeed a feeling that I have shared at more than a few pivotal moments in writing this dissertation. Fortunately for me, however, there have been many people who have had the patience, insight, and kindness to help me to say exactly that (or as close as I can get, anyway), and to whom I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. Foremost among these are the members of my dissertation committee, and above all my advisor, David Wellbery, who as a scholar embodies a force and love of thought that is as limitless as his knowledge and generosity as a teacher and mentor. There is not a single corner of this project that has not benefited immeasurably from the light that David has cast into it, and always with the wisest and steadiest hand that I have ever known.

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Sic memorans largo fletu simul ora rigabat.

[…]

Interea videt Aeneas in valle reducta
seclusum nemus et virgulta sonantia silvae
Lethaeumque, domos placidas qui praenatat, amnem.

—Virgil, *Aeneid* VI.699-705

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And tears slowly flowed down his face as he spoke with memory.

[…]

Meanwhile, at the valley's edge, Aeneas sees
A hidden glen and the rustling brush of a wood
And the river Lethe, slowly flowing past the dwellings set still on its shore.

Introduction

Ottilie's *Augenblick*: On the Place of Drowning in German Realism (1842-1892)

> *Das Wasser als das chaotische Element des Lebens droht hier nicht in wüstem Wogen, das dem Menschen den Untergang bringt, sondern in der rätselhaften Stille, die ihn zu Grunde gehn läßt.*
> —Walter Benjamin[1]

Evening is falling on a young woman sitting at home, thinking about her family: her mother, her brother, but especially her father. She thinks about her mother's death, brought on by the shock of learning that her son was wanted for theft; the young woman then thinks of how her father had turned to her and sworn that if she should bring any further shame upon the family, he would slit his own throat. She also thinks of the oath that she swore to him in return, vowing to keep the family's honor intact, and thereby to safeguard his life. But then she thinks about the child that she is bearing in secret, the child she had conceived with the man to whom she had been betrothed, but who, after learning of the scandal caused in town by her brother's crime and arrest, has broken their engagement. She thinks of this, and again of her father, and then of the well that stands near the house; she thinks about how easily one might accidentally slip while drawing water, especially in the dark. She thinks about the moonlight outside, the night around it, and her father's words. Then she rises, takes a pitcher to fill with water from the well, as she often does, and exits the stage. She does not re-enter.

So ends Friedrich Hebbel's domestic tragedy *Maria Magdalena*, which appeared in the year 1844 and simultaneously drew to a close the epoch of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* and heralded the emergence of a new literary and aesthetic movement: German Realism. The leitmotif that forms the joint of these two generic trajectories—that of a death in water just beyond the borders of vision—is remarkable not only for its chilling starkness

[1] "Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*" (1925).

and rich symbolism, but also for its ubiquity in the narratives of German Realism. Indeed, of the many images and topoi that pervade nineteenth-century German fiction, none is more recurrent—or troubling—than drowning. Throughout these stories, characters consistently find themselves before water, presented with the familiar, visible realm above the surface, and in the same moment confront the unobservable, uncanny domain beneath it. Then, with somber regularity, they disappear into the depths. One cannot help but wonder how to understand this symbolism of drowning, with its haunting invocation of solitary death on the societal periphery, alongside the aesthetic and cultural program of a genre like Realism. What role do these hidden, individual deaths in water play within a literary movement that set out precisely to *reveal* universal truths of human life?

The present dissertation takes these questions as its point of departure, along with the observation that the very fact that these questions might naturally occur to a reader of German Realist texts suggests a need to revise the traditional notion of realist aesthetics as a programmatic effort to make visible the simple contours of everyday human life. Focusing upon both canonical and lesser-known texts by Adalbert Stifter, Gottfried Keller, Theodor Storm, and Theodor Fontane, the following chapters will demonstrate how these scenes of drowning function as narrative "knots" in which two concepts fundamental to the epistemology of realist literature intertwine: law and sacrifice. Broadly speaking, the narrative logic of drowning stages a conflict between the "surface" domain of law (whether natural, societal, religious, etc.) and the hidden "depths" of subjective interiority. In each of my chosen texts, the resolution of this conflict takes the form of an act of sacrifice that either surrenders some part of the self for the sake of the law or offers up a form of law for the sake of the self. Consequently, an overarching claim of this dissertation will be that the space between these spheres—the locus of drowning—is also a space proper to ethics.

The main task of this introductory chapter is to outline the epistemological as well as conceptual backdrops against which the symbolism of drowning operates in German Realism. However, before turning to this it will be necessary to look more closely at the historical and aesthetic context of this particular literary movement.

I.

Instances and images of drowning appear now and again in the prose literature and lyric poetry of Romanticism and the *Biedermeierzeit*,[2] but they veritably explode in German—also referred to by the modifier, commonly attributed to Otto Ludwig,[3] of "Poetic"—Realism. We can only approach the question of how to make sense of this via an adjacent and rather overgrown path, one that concerns the longstanding and vexed question of how exactly to characterize German Realism in the first place.[4] For instance, Marxist critics following the itinerary of Georg Lukács have tended to prefer the qualifier "bourgeois" to "Poetic," while others are happier to oscillate between the two, and all for very specific and ably defended reasons. This seemingly cosmetic quarrel over nomenclature is set against the even larger (and mostly unanimous) agreement to disagree about how "realism" itself should be defined (a state of affairs which Roman Jakobson seems to have felt it necessary to address, with some exasperation, as early as 1921).[5]

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[2] E.g., Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), Droste-Hülshoff's *Ledwina* (1819/1824), and Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821/1829). I will dwell upon the former novel of Goethe's in more detail later.

[3] Clifford A. Bernd, *German Poetic Realism* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 102. Bernd points out elsewhere that this term was not new, as it had in fact been inherited from Scandinavia (specifically Denmark and Sweden), where *poetisk Realisme* had existed since the 1820s. Bernd, *Poetic Realism in Scandinavia and Central Europe, 1820-1895* (Columbia: Camden House, 1995), 2-4, 17, 64.

[4] For precise as well as broad delineations of German Realism as an epoch and movement, see the introductory chapters of the following excellent studies: Eric Downing, *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Robert C. Holub, *Reflections of Realism: Paradox, Norm, and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century German Prose* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991); and Claudia Stockinger, *Das 19. Jahrhundert: Zeitalter des Realismus* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010). Cf. René Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship," *Neophilologus* 45 (1961): 1-20.

[5] "By failing to distinguish among the variety of concepts latent in the term 'realism,' theoreticians and historians of art—in particular, of literature—are acting as if the term were a bottomless sack into which

Indeed, it is often easier to point to clear distinctions between German and other traditions of European Realism than it is to articulate a satisfactory definition of one versus the other. In contrast to French Realism, for example, German writers opted not to focus as intently upon the minutiae of daily experience in a newly mass society, nor upon the "decentered" zone of this experience that emerges when industrialized capitalism replaces older hierarchies and social structures,[6] but rather upon small, fleeting insights contained within the simplicity of intimate communities and subjective impressions. Or, phrased in the German, "Poetic" Realists' own terms, to highlight the instances of "das Wahre" that one finds in the interstitial spaces separating quotidian "Realität" and lived—perhaps even existential—"Wirklichkeit."

"wahrer als alle Wirklichkeit" – The Program of Poetic Realism

While some of the better-known practitioners of German Realism generally refrained from weighing in on polemical questions of what "realism" should or should not be understood to comprise, there was a comparable number of theoreticians who tried to sketch a programmatic template for realist literature. Most prominent among this latter group were Gustav Freytag and Julian Schmidt, whose periodical *Die Grenzboten* (est. 1841) provided a platform for aesthetic debates and formulations of the literary movement they were seeking to codify. In the most elemental terms, their project seems to have taken form gradually in response to a collective disenchantment with both the speculative acrobatics of Romanticism and the dour materialism of the post-1848 discursive landscape. Accordingly, it was from the hope to find a bridge between the ideal and the real that the synthetic program of "Poetic" Realism was first enunciated. As

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everything and anything could be conveniently hidden away." Jakobson, "On Realism in Art," in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (McLean: Dalkey Archive Press, 2002), 45.

[6] Fredric Jameson, "The Realist Floor Plan," in *On Signs*, ed. Marshall Blonksy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 373-384.

Schmidt writes, "[d]er Glaube der vergangenen 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."[7]

It is worth pausing briefly to remark that although the key issues of interest to German Realists (truth, reality, experience) were located at the fulcrum of divisions within contemporary philosophical debates, only a relatively small group of these authors—Gottfried Keller in particular—are known to have engaged with the philosophical thought of the day. This is of course not to say that the pioneering theorists of programmatic Realism, above all Julian Schmidt and Otto Ludwig, in any way refrained from grappling with epistemological questions related to their own aesthetic project.[8] And indeed, many of the issues and themes which occupied late nineteenth-century philosophers in the German sphere make important appearances in Realist fiction, such as materialism (Keller), philosophies of scientific and historical knowledge (Adalbert Stifter and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer), and post-Revolutionary pessimism (Ferdinand von Saar, Theodor Fontane, and Wilhelm Raabe).[9]

In spite of these more abstract epistemological contexts, German Realism retained a properly Biedermeier interest in the seemingly mundane patterns of pastoral and domestic life, though without reverting to blithely lyrical praise of the simple and pure. Serene and beautiful things were not to be depicted for their own sake; instead, the truths prone to hide behind them were to be *represented* for the sake of a deeper good that

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[7] Julian Schmidt, "Die neue Generation," in *Bilder aus dem geistigen Leben unserer Zeit* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1870), 34 (emphasis added).

[8] John B. Lyon in fact suggests that "Realists…represented a unique confluence of materialism and idealism," while Ulf Eisele argues that German Realism, despite being a post-revolutionary literary movement, was determined not so much by a social problematic as by a philosophical and epistemological one; in other words, by an engagement not with liberalism but with idealism, and specifically with questions of *Wirklichkeit* versus *Realität* versus *das Wahre*. See Lyon, *Out of Place: German Realism, Displacement, and Modernity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 15; and Eisele, "Realismus-Theorie," in *Deutsche Literatur. Eine Sozialgeschichte* Bd. 7 *Vom Nachmärz zur Gründerzeit: Realismus 1848-1880*, ed. Horst Albert Glaser (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1982), 36-46, here 39.

[9] See Frederick C. Beiser, *After Hegel: German Philosophy 1840-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

ramifies out of them and into the human community. Theodor Fontane speaks to this very distinction in an 1853 essay on the burgeoning Realist movement, emphasizing that realism is not merely "das nackte Wiedergeben alltäglichen Lebens." Rather, "das Wirkliche" is the "Stoff" of realist art, much as the marble block does not constitute the sculpture, but simply the material for it. He continues:

> [Der Realismus] ist die Wiederspiegelung alles wirklichen Lebens, aller wahren Kräfte und Interessen im Elemente der Kunst; er ist…eine "*Interessenvertretung*" auf seine Art. Er umfängt das ganze reiche Leben, das Größte wie das Kleinste…den höchsten Gedanken, die tiefste Empfindung zieht er in sein Bereich […] Denn alles das ist *wirklich*. Der Realismus will nicht die bloße Sinnenwelt und nichts als diese; er will am allerwenigsten das bloß Handgreifliche, aber er will das *Wahre*…[10]

Here, Fontane articulates a commitment to "the True"—as opposed to pure imagination or stringent mimesis—which scholars such as Wolfgang Preisendanz have seen the qualification of "*Poetic*" Realism to reflect.[11] This position raised a predictably complex methodological problem for those writing Poetic-Realist theory and narrative: how does one go about capturing and conveying those higher truths immanent to exterior reality without favoring a pursuit of either the ideal or the objective?[12] Schmidt broaches precisely this dilemma in his "warning" that the "new Realism" must not be confused with what was formerly referred to as "Objectivity":

> Diese Warnung ist darum nöthig, weil man in Schiller, dem Idealisten, den Gegensatz sowohl gegen das Princip der Objectivität, als des Realismus zu suchen pflegt. Wenn man früher von einem Dichter verlangte, er solle objectiv sein, so meinte man damit, er solle sich mit seiner Person nicht vordrängen; […] Bei dem neuen Princip handelt es sich nicht mehr um die innere, sondern um die äußere Wahrheit, nicht um die

[10] Fontane, "Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848," in *Sämtliche Werke* Bd. 21.1, ed. Kurt Schreinert (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1963), 12-13 (emphases in the original).
[11] Preisendanz, "Voraussetzungen des poetischen Realismus in der deutschen Erzählkunst des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Wege des Realismus: zur Poetik und Erzählkunst im 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977), 68-91.
[12] Cf. Hans Blumenberg's genealogy of the *Wirklichkeitsbegriff* vis-à-vis this question; like the Poetic Realists, Blumenberg does not think that literature's inability to mimetically capture reality deprives it of aesthetic potency. However, unlike Schmidt or Fontane, he regards this potency to be poetological rather than methodological in nature, suggesting for instance that the underlying theme of the novel-form per se is "seine eigene Möglichkeit nicht als Fiktion von Realitäten, sondern als *Fiktion der Realität von Realitäten*." Blumenberg, "Wirklichkeitsbegriff und Möglichkeit des Romans," in *Nachahmung und Illusion. Kolloquium Gießen Juni 1963. Vorlagen und Verhandlungen*, ed. Hans Robert Jauß (München: Eidos Verlag, 1964), 9-27, here 27.

> Uebereinstimmung mit sich selbst, sondern um die Uebereinstimmung mit der sogenannten Wirklichkeit.[13]

Schmidt's interest in disambiguating objectivity, truth, realism, and reality has left a lasting impression in *Realismusforschung*. For instance, Richard Brinkmann's classic 1957 study begins from this very question of how much realism has to do with objectivity, shifting attention from German Realism as a genre of exterior depiction and social criticism in order to focus instead on its (proto-phenomenological) definition of "reality" as a category entirely subject to the Subject, i.e., to the relativity of human perception as opposed to supposedly stable, *a posteriori* observation.[14] One year after Brinkmann's monograph appeared, Hannah Arendt, while analyzing the concepts of the public and private spheres, succinctly parsed the understanding of "reality" that Germanists of her day were beginning to identify as one of the *casus adversi* that had spurred the program of German Realism. "The subjectivity of privacy," Arendt writes,

> […] can never replace the reality rising out of the sum total of aspects presented by one object to a multitude of spectators. Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.[15]

The notion not only that reality and objectivity are linked in their shared dependency upon the event of external observation traditionally associated with rationality (*theoria*), but also that this event properly unfolds in the intersubjective rather than subjective sphere of experience, is one that the German Realists were eager to revise. Precisely their emphasis upon "das Wahre" rather than upon "das bloß Handgreifliche" suggests a desire to break from the scientific rationalism that was exercising such influence within German and European culture of the late nineteenth century. However, this break would resemble more of a "shift in gaze," moving from the methodical, public *theoria* of

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[13] Julian Schmidt, "Der neueste englische Roman und das Princip des Realismus (1856)," in *Realismus und Gründerzeit: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1848-1880* Bd. 2, ed. Max Bucher et al. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1975), 90.
[14] Brinkmann, *Wirklichkeit und Illusion: Studien über Gehalt und Grenzen des Begriffs Realismus für die erzählende Dichtung des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1957).
[15] Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 57.

objective reality to a subjective, Schopenhauerian *Anschauung* of veiled but nevertheless universal truths of human experience. Following this thread, Wolfgang Preisendanz emphasizes that German Realists (Otto Ludwig in particular) regarded their literary project as one of "Verklärung," not mimetic accuracy. For Preisendanz, the very phrase "Poetic Realism" reflects the movement's enthusiastic concession that art can never honestly purport to capture reality. The modifier "poetic" acknowledges this gap between mimesis and *Wirklichkeit*, but simultaneously designates it as a site in which *das Wahre* can be manifested through a process of *Verklärung*.[16]

This invites us to think back to Schmidt, who stresses that while realist literature should not necessarily pursue the stringent objectivity that idealist writers such as Friedrich Schiller were thought to lack, it nevertheless should strive to convey a certain degree of what he calls "äußere Wahrheit." Ironically, it is in a short text by Schiller himself that we can find a striking anticipation of what Schmidt seems to be seeking in a Realism that is not reducible to pure mimesis. In his brief but rich essay "Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie," which was published as a foreword to his 1803 drama *Die Braut von Messina*, Schiller assigns both structural and aesthetic importance to the modern tragic chorus as a kind of foreign body that, far from upholding Classicism's obsession with verisimilitude, constitutes an "Außending" within the economy of the tragedy.[17] By drawing attention to its own artificiality as something "inserted" into the drama, the chorus makes an incision of sorts into the mimetic tissue of the play, interrupting the illusory spell of the onstage narrative. This is important for Schiller

[16] Neither Brinkmann's nor Preisendanz's convictions about Realism were in any way radical, however; Georg Simmel had in fact already expressed very similar thoughts about realist art as early as 1908. Consider, for instance, the following passage: "Man könnte sogar sagen, die Wirklichkeit als solche sei etwas Metaphysisches: die Sinne können sie uns nicht geben, sondern umgekehrt ist sie etwas, was wir den Sinnen geben, eine Beziehung des Geistes zu dem unaussprechlichen Geheimnis des Seins, keine besondere, anschauliche Eigenschaft der Dinge, sondern eine Bedeutung die über die Summe ihrer Eigenschaften kommt." Simmel, "Vom Realismus in der Kunst," in *Jenseits der Schönheit: Schriften zur Ästhetik und Kunstphilosophie*, ed. Ingo Meyer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 284-294, here 286.
[17] Schiller, "Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie," in *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe in zwanzig Bänden* Bd. 20, ed. Otto Güntter and Georg Witkowski (Leipzig: Hesse & Becker, 1910), 251.

because, in his view, poetic art cannot—and should not attempt to—*replicate* empirical reality or experience. Instead, he argues, it more properly functions as a vehicle of higher truth—not merely of "dem Scheine der Wahrheit" that is achieved by an artwork's pursuit of "das Wirkliche," but rather of "der Wahrheit selbst, auf dem festen und tiefen Grunde der Natur […]"[18]

According to Schiller, in a modern tragedy the chorus' primary function as the *Außending* is first to open up and subsequently to illuminate a divide between the sensible and the ideal, which he identifies as the two principle elements of *Poesie*.[19] It is only within this gap between reality and the real, between mimesis and poïesis, between truths and the True that an artwork can become "wahrer […] als alle Wirklichkeit, und realer, als alle Erfahrung."[20] While such language could easily lend itself to an aesthetic or possibly even metaphysical mantra such as those for which Schiller and his milieu were well known, one might also read it in a different mode. More precisely, one might interpret the gap that is prized open by an *Außending* as a poetological concession that a truly mimetic realism is implausible, if not impossible, and therefore as an interesting precursor to the concession (or is it more of a declaration?) implicit in Otto Ludwig's formula of "*Poetic* Realism."

"Till human voices wake us, and we drown"[21] – *Außending*, *Falke*, *Verklärung*

Let us take up again our original subject of drowning-as-leitmotif by posing a somewhat provocative question: might water perform some variation of the function that Schiller ascribes to the *Außending*? To be sure, its narrative operation is less extreme than Schiller's idea of a medial break in the rood screen of verisimilitude itself; drowning does not take us, as readers, "out" of a text in the same way that an unexpected choral ode

[18] Ibid., 257-258.
[19] Ibid., 256.
[20] Ibid., 253.
[21] T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915/1920), ln. 130.

might shake a dreamy *spectateur idéal* from his or her transfixed state. But it does pull at a certain corner of the diegetic fabric, drawing our attention to a vanishing point of our readerly perception that has suddenly revealed itself in a place we would not necessarily have expected. After all, water is internal to the narrated world, as it is to the real world—it is everywhere, a ubiquitous and typically innocuous part of any Realist *Heimatlandschaft*—and yet, as we shall see throughout this dissertation, when it transforms into a site of death and, most significantly, of disappearance, its *Heimlichkeit* becomes at once *unheimlich*, if not quietly baleful.

How does this stand in relation with German Realism's desired aesthetics? We might recall Fontane's 1853 essay, in which he claims that Realism "will nicht die bloße Sinnenwelt und nichts als diese; er will am allerwenigsten das bloß Handgreifliche, aber er will das *Wahre*." Particularly crucial for our purposes, however, is Fontane's next assertion: "[der Realismus] schließt nichts aus als die Lüge, das Forcierte, das Nebelhafte, das Abgestorbene […] Noch einmal: er läßt die Toten oder doch wenigstens das Tote ruhen…"[22] If this is indeed so, then we must once again ask the question of just *why* there is so much drowning in this epoch?

On the elementary level of its recurrence as a topos, drowning, like water symbolism more broadly, fulfills a formal tenet of Poetic Realism that the contemporary author and critic Paul Heyse articulated in 1871. While seeking to offer a structural account of the nineteenth-century novella that would not lean too heavily upon classical criteria such as Goethe's "unerhörte Begebenheit," Heyse outlined what came to be known as the *Falkentheorie*, which holds that the entire drama of a successful novella should be able to be encapsulated by a single emblematic motif, or "Falke" (an allusion to Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the leitmotif of the ninth tale told on the fifth day).[23] A

[22] Fontane, "Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848," 13-14.
[23] Heyse, "Einleitung," in *Deutscher Novellenschatz* Bd. 1, ed. Paul Heyse and Hermann Kurz (München: Rudolph Oldenbourg, 1871), v-xxiv.

novella's *Falke* can comprise any topos which, somewhat akin to T. S. Eliot's notion of an objective correlative, is at once "eine starke Silhouette" and a "Sammelpunkt" that enfolds the principle affective and formal components of the story within a single image and instant.[24] However, in order to provide a satisfactory analysis of what drowning represents in these texts, we must go beyond the simple fact of its prevalence as an image and ask *why* it might be so prevalent, i.e., we must ask what drowning might *mean* vis-à-vis the aesthetic program of Poetic Realism itself.

An essay by Marianne Wünsch, unfortunately seldom cited in the secondary literature, gestures in a helpful direction. She first notes how death not only plays a quantitatively more prominent role in German Realism than it had in immediately preceding literary movements, but also a qualitatively different role: whereas death had been a "funktionaler Träger für andere Probleme" in the *Goethezeit*, in Realism *it* is the problem to be confronted. According to Wünsch, this is because by the middle of the nineteenth century there is no longer a common "Sinngebungssystem" like the one that had perdured in the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the Biedermeier (i.e., either a theological or a Platonic notion of an afterlife). Death in Realism instead emblematizes the human experience of reality itself "als temporaler Prozeß, als sich Wandelndes." Wünsch notes that the German Realists typically present death as a transition between spheres, before remarking how "wahrlich erstaunlich oft finden sich denn auch Todesfälle durch Ertrinken […] der Raum des Todes liegt unterhalb oder außerhalb der normalen Realität, verborgen unter der Oberfläche."[25]

Wünsch's observation sounds a commanding keynote; after all, what we have seen emerge from the programmatic formulations of Poetic Realism is a project not of

[24] Ibid., xviii, xx. Fredric Jameson underscores this synthetic quality of Heyse's theory, writing that within the *Falke*, "time [is] made space, in other words, the event materialized" in the form of a motivic index. Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (New York: Verso, 2013), 23.
[25] Wünsch, "'Tod' in der Erzählliteratur des deutschen Realismus," *Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft* 40 (1999): 1-14; here 1, 7, 9.

fixation upon the world's objective exteriors, nor of communion with the transcendent *Ich* of Romantic art and philosophy, but instead of what Preisendanz terms *Verklärung*—of truth's mediation via the poetically real and true rather than the speculatively ideal or scientifically empirical. The recurrence of drowning does not so much contradict as recast Fontane's insistence that Realism should let "die Toten oder doch wenigstens das Tote ruhen," for the prevalence of death in these texts certainly suggests it to be a truth of substantial importance for those who wrote them. If this is the case, what is poetically significant about drowning is less its removal of death from view than its emphasis of death's embeddedness within our everyday reality. Like *das Wahre*, drowning (à la Schiller's *Außending*) unveils a space of jointure *between* the spheres of perception and intuition, between the domains of "Oberfläche" and "Unterfläche" to which Wünsch draws our attention.

However, in the spirit of *Verklärung*, Realist narrative does not come right out and declare that "the True" lies somewhere between the perceivable and the imperceivable. What we find instead is a recurring schema: over and over again in these stories, individuals confront various forms of law, and this confrontation culminates in scenes of drowning. As we shall see, drowning—the point of convergence between the *Oberfläche* and the *Unterfläche*—will stand for the point of convergence between law and subjectivity: namely, for an instant in which a sacrificial decision is reached and enacted. Before coming to this, however, we must first establish the basic parameters for what law and sacrifice entail in the context of German Realist aesthetics. It will therefore be helpful to outline briefly some of the primary qualities of law and sacrifice that have been articulated in the Western tradition in order to take note of how the German tradition received them into the nineteenth century.

II.

Legacies of Law and Sacrifice

A good place to look first is Thomas Aquinas' hypothesis that the very word for law in Latin (*lex*) derived from the verb "to bind" (*ligare*), "because law obliges persons to act,"[26] a dynamic that signals human reason's innate attunement to external—and ultimately, for Aquinas, divine—ordinance.[27] More particularly, though, it is the ties linking the external world and human understanding that, in the eighteenth century, Giambattista Vico would identify as the shared root of both law and the composition and comprehension of written language (*legere*).[28] Vico suggests law to have originated from an elemental human impulse to gather and bind certain things together which otherwise would have remained dissolute, uncontained, and inconsistent. As Aquinas had done five centuries before him, Vico grounds his hypothesis in the philology of law itself. While discussing the "rustic or sylvan origins" of the Latin language, he chooses *lex* as an example:

> First it must have meant a collection of acorns. Thence we believe derived…*illex*, the oak…for the oak produces the acorns by which the swine are drawn together. *Lex* was next a collection of vegetables, from which the latter were called *legumina*. Later on, at a time when the vulgar letters had not yet been invented for writing down the laws, *lex* by necessity of civil nature must have meant a collection of citizens…so that the presence of the people was the *lex*…Finally, collecting letters, and making, as it were, a sheaf of them for each word, was called *legere*, reading.[29]

Vico understands law primarily in terms of its capacity for spatial, conceptual, or temporal longevity, which results from placing distinct elements in relation to one another. If, as he proposes, the essence of law—like reading—is enmeshed with the act

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[26] Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*, trans. Richard J. Regan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 11 [*Summa Theologiae*, Q. 90, A. 1, Obj. 3].
[27] Ibid., 18 (*ST*, Q. 91, A. 2, *ad.* 3). Medieval theologians, including Aquinas himself, commonly cite Book I of Augustine's *De libero arbitrio* (395 C.E.) as the *locus classicus* for this idea.
[28] Martin Heidegger, while tracing the significance of the Greek verb *legein* and its derivative *logos* in his 1935 lectures on metaphysics, highlights the same etymology of "gathering" as Vico does with respect to *legere*. However, while Vico suggests the primordial logic of gathering to lie at the root of positive law, Heidegger somewhat more dramatically locates "die sammelnde Gesammeltheit" of *logos* at the core of Being's very essence, which he goes on to link with *physis*. Thus, to a certain degree the shared etymology of *legein* and *legere* marks a middle zone between the key conceptual and lexical fonts of law in the West: *physis*, *nomos*, *ius* and *lex*. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), 94-100.
[29] Vico, *The New Science (Third Edition of 1744)*, trans. Thomas Bergin and Max Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 78 (§240).

of gathering together separate things in order to comprehend them in their new conjointure, then it is also enmeshed with the human activity of bringing consciousness into contact with nature, of *linking* the interior to the exterior. Here, law and literature, *lex* and *legere* align in their common orientation towards reality.

Vico provides an important precedent for nineteenth-century German thought on law by emphasizing the elemental, innately human interest in forging a meaningful link between the particular and the universal, and in encapsulating within language a distinct observation or judgment about reality that can apply—i.e., that can *bind*—as true across different times, places, and communities. Indeed, these themes retained a central place in the established institution of German legal philosophy (embodied by figures such as Friedrich Karl von Savigny) as well as in new campaigns (such as that of his student Jakob Grimm) to restore law to its "proper" role as a fixture of national culture and poetic heritage.[30] Given this network of themes—reality, language, community—it is unsurprising that law would eventually become a topic of interest for a literary movement such as German Realism. However, this relevance is more complicated than first glance might suggest, for while law was traditionally associated with the action of gathering and linking together, within German Realist narratives law is more often the backdrop—if not the catalyst—of characters' removal *from* order and boundedness. And, most paradoxically, the root cause of this removal is often the characters' desire precisely for lawfulness itself.

While law has been associated across the centuries with a desire to bind elements into one place and time (i.e., into a distinct context), the other key concept at issue for

[30] On the history of German legal theory in the nineteenth century—and particularly the conflicts between Savigny's "Romanism" and Grimm's Romanticism—see James Q. Whitman, *The Legacy of Roman Law in the German Romantic Era: Historical Vision and Legal Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. x-xiv; 200-210; Theodore Ziolkowski, *The Mirror of Justice: Literary Reflections of Legal Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 188-210; Peter Stein, *Roman Law in European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 118 ff; and Thomas Oliver Beebee, *Citation and Precedent: Conjunctions and Disjunctions of German Law and Literature* (New York: Continuum, 2012), esp. 45-47.

us, sacrifice, has traditionally been associated with an *interpenetration* of distinct spheres. In the narratives that the following chapters examine, this sacrificial characteristic of interpenetration centers upon acts of decision. We will ultimately see that the ethical problem of decision—as a merging point of law and sacrifice—is also at the heart of the drowning symbolism that pervades German Realism.

For twentieth-century thinkers and critics, sacrifice—and particularly its relation to law—fairly exploded into the foreground as a subject of study. This of course did not take place *ex nihilo* but arose gradually out of a common interest in sacrifice that was shared by many of the burgeoning academic disciplines of the nineteenth century. It stirred first in continental philosophy, before passing through history and anthropology. A principle aspect of sacrifice that drew the attention of these various fields—violence—is also the chief aspect that distances their analyses of sacrifice and law from the function that these two themes perform in the literature of German Realism.

Before we can address this issue, though, we must first come to terms with the more immediate difficulty presented by the multiplicity of definitions and understandings of what sacrifice means in the first place. In a recent and valuable study, Terry Eagleton has outlined several of the foundational theories, beginning with Edward Burnett Tylor's account of sacrifice as the surrender of something valuable in the form of a gift (*Primitive Culture*, 1871), to William Robertson Smith's designation of it as a symbolic feast (*Religion of the Semites*, 1889), or Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss' emphasis of its attempt to mediate between the sacred and the profane realms (*Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice*, 1898). However, as Eagleton observes, the overarching aim of sacrifice, whether in the literal immolation of an object or the figurative (i.e., moral) offering up of one's

impulses and desires, is always to make possible the establishment and maintenance of civilization.[31]

Here it is helpful to consider how nineteenth-century culture revised the use of sacrifice as a trope, gradually shifting emphasis from the mythic and tragic paradigms of ritual death that had been popular in eighteenth-century Classicist drama to an ethical and secular register of self-offering, abstention, and exchange. As Derek Hughes has argued, the specific topos of human (as opposed to animal or vegetal) sacrifice became disentangled from theology in nineteenth-century art and literature. In the preceding century, the symbolism of sacrifice had frequently been utilized in connection with religious and social institutions, but Hughes suggests that this ends with Romanticism, after which "human sacrifice predominantly becomes a means of exploring and articulating the subjective."[32]

In broad terms, then, sacrifice made its entrance into nineteenth-century culture through a gradual process of disassociation from its original mythic, tragic, and spiritual frameworks of meaning, becoming invested with hermeneutic and metaphorical value in place of a traditionally more literal significance. As a consequence, the motif of sacrifice began both to dilate and to extend, coming to constitute an important aspect of numerous aesthetic and discursive programs, from Friedrich Schlegel's Romanticism[33] to the philosophical systems of thinkers such as Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.[34]

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[31] Eagleton, *Radical Sacrifice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), here 3-19. Another helpful resource in this regard is the edited volume *Sacrifice and Modern Thought*, ed. Julia Meszaros and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[32] Hughes, *Culture and Sacrifice: Ritual Death in Literature and Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 151.

[33] In the *Ideen* (1800), for instance, Schlegel posits the ultimate sacrifice to be that of the artist, the sole figure capable of serving as a "mediator" (*Mittler*) between the human and the divine: "Ein Mittler ist derjenige, der Göttliches in sich wahrnimmt, und sich selbst vernichtend preisgibt, um dieses Göttliche zu verkündigen, mitzuteilen, und darzustellen allen Menschen [...] In der Begeisterung des Vernichtens offenbart sich zuerst der Sinn göttlicher Schöpfung." Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften*, ed. Wolfdietrich Rasch (München: Hanser, 1956), 90-91, 101.

[34] See Paulo Diego Bubbio, *Sacrifice in the Post-Kantian Tradition: Perspectivism, Intersubjectivity and Recognition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014).

One could conceptualize this gradual shift in cultural understandings of sacrifice as a pendulum that first swung away from themes of ritual violence in the early nineteenth century, then came to rest over the ethics of self-offering during the epoch of German Realism, only to swing back again towards issues of violence and social origins as the century turned. This is certainly borne out by the more influential accounts of sacrifice in the twentieth century, such as Sigmund Freud's *Totem und Tabu* (1913), Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944), Georges Bataille's *La Part maudite* (1949), René Girard's *La Violence et le sacré* (1972), and Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1995). What these thinkers all have in common is a basic understanding of sacrifice as a domain of violence, negation, or extirpation that is innate to the origins of human culture. They are salient for modern discourse on sacrifice and its relation to law, and therefore important to keep in mind for any project that deals with it narrowly or broadly. However, the texts under investigation in this dissertation call out for readings that frequently lead away from these theoretical edifices. This is because German Realism does not depict bourgeois society as a latent suppression or a lithe manipulation of violent impulses by means of legally and ethically codified institutions. Instead, my chosen narratives tell of ideological, monetary, and moral self-sacrifice carried out by private individuals *amidst* established forms and concepts of law. In these stories, sacrifice unfolds upon the small stage of interpersonal and social relationships rather than the grand proscenium of myth or war, and constitutes an offering up of one form of law for the sake of another rather than the bloody appeasement of a deity or a political cause.[35]

[35] Modern scholars have typically approached sacrifice from the perspective of culture's originary imbrication with violence, as evidenced by the works of Freud, Bataille, Girard, and Agamben mentioned above. This tendency is also reflected in influential anthropological and sociological approaches to the subject; one thinks especially of Walter Burkert's *Homo Necans*. However, more recent scholarship has begun to emphasize sacrifice's non-violent valences, particularly in the fields of theology and comparative religion. See, respectively, Douglas Hedley, *Sacrifice Imagined: Violence, Atonement and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 2011); and Kathryn McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence: A Comparative Study of Sacrifice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

The nature of this contrast can be helpfully illustrated by tracing an ancient shift that took place within Judeo-Christian thinking about sacrifice, recently described by Moshe Halbertal as a transition from a paradigm of "sacrificing to" to one of "sacrificing for." Halbertal explains that during the Second Temple period burnt offerings had been a common liturgical practice. After the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E., however, ritual sacrifice was replaced with non-violent modes of offering and appeasement, particularly atonement, charity, and prayer.[36] In other words, a shift occurs from the semiotic model of immolating an object (e.g., an animal) that *stands for* something else (e.g., the sacrificer's guilt, a supplicant community's vital resources, etc.) to an agapic model in which the sacrificer *directly* offers a part of the self in a *non-negational* mode, thereby entering the ethical (as opposed to ritual) sphere.

While the kinds of sacrifice that appear in the narratives I explore in this project vary—some are conscious, others retroactively acknowledged, some economically rooted, others ideologically so—their mode is that of "sacrificing for" rather than "sacrificing to," in Halbertal's terms. More particularly, the sacrifices that we encounter in the literature of German Realism focalize concrete instants of *decision* in which one possible course of action that accords with certain norms and codes (i.e., forms of law) is relinquished for the sake of—or at the expense of—another one. These cases of sacrifice are therefore very different from the violently literal rites with which Burkert, Girard or Agamben associate the term, and more akin to Freud's vision of sacrifice as a social and moral mechanism of modern life.

By addressing the immediate question of how and why law and sacrifice are linked to drowning in these texts, it will be possible by the end of the project to address a second, but much larger question: what function does drowning, as an emblem of the

[36] Halbertal, *On Sacrifice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 48-53, 62. Also see Guy G. Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 56-83, esp. 63-69.

interrelation between law and sacrifice, serve in the context of German Realism as a whole? As the following chapters will demonstrate, this function is akin to what Schiller's essay on the tragic chorus termed an *Außending*. More specifically, the drowning scene becomes a narratological mechanism whereby an intrinsic but unobtrusive element of the narrative landscape suddenly becomes a site in which time gets distended within an *Augenblick,* thus becoming suddenly "außen" to the fabric of the story despite being "internal" to it at the same time. Let us now consider a paradigmatic instance of this that prefigures much of what the drowning motif carries out in German Realism.

III.

Ottilie's *Augenblick*

In a seminal essay, Walter Benjamin claims that the subject of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's 1809 novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is not marriage, despite all outward appearances: "Nirgends wären ihre [= die Ehe] sittlichen Gewalten darin zu suchen. Von Anfang an sind sie im Verschwinden, wie der Strand unter Wassern zur Flutzeit."[37] Rather, he regards the true issue of the narrative to be how this very domain of the ethical (or of *nomos* more broadly) is overwhelmed by the mythic.[38] Benjamin locates the function of ethics in the novel within its etymological foundation upon character (*ethos*).[39] As he goes on to argue, character is rooted first and foremost in language and enunciation, and out of language proceeds to decision, the principle domain in which the ethical becomes actualized. Benjamin centers his analysis on the figure of Ottilie in order to read the crux of the novel's drama—a drowning—as an effect of her inability to "articulate" her own interior. She is silent and "verschlossen," which for Benjamin is key

[37] Benjamin, "Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*," in *Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. 1.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 131.
[38] Ibid., 140.
[39] Ibid., 174.

to her lack of character, as well as to the resulting incapacity for ethical decision—shared by all the characters—that determines the narrative's tragic events.

Benjamin's focus upon Ottilie is tightly interwoven with the key element that anticipates my chosen Realist texts, for he emphasizes the importance of *water* as a topos in the unfurling of each figure's trajectory; not as a violent agent of justice or the divine, but rather as a stage for the "Schuldzusammenhang" of fate,[40] that passive but ever-present inevitability of consequence following from *decision* (or the absence thereof): "Das Wasser als das chaotische Element des Lebens droht hier nicht in wüstem Wogen, das dem Menschen den Untergang bringt, sondern in der rätselhaften Stille, die ihn zu Grunde gehn läßt."[41]

This atmosphere of unobtrusive, patient catastrophe is conveyed by the fading light of dusk in which Ottilie, hurrying back from her tryst with Eduard, thinks to glimpse the white folds of Charlotte's dress on the balcony. Her nerves unsettled, Ottilie decides to forego the footpath leading around the lake in favor of the shorter, more direct route across the "Wasserraum" by boat. This momentary decision proves to hold a dual significance for the remainder of the novel's plot: first, within the symbolic framework of the novel, this abandonment of the path signals the abandonment of law, as Ottilie herself will later indicate in her penitent declaration that "ich bin aus meiner Bahn geschritten, ich habe meine Gesetze gebrochen."[42] Second, it is this instant of abandonment that leads to the drowning of the child, a scene in which the narrative voice suddenly switches to the historical present tense in a *distentio* of the terrible moment being recounted.

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[40] "Schicksal ist der Schuldzusammenhang von Lebendigem" (ibid., 138).
[41] Ibid., 133.
[42] Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, in *Werke* Bd. 3, ed. Albrecht Schöne and Waltraud Wiethölter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 598.

With her senses reeling, Ottilie clambers unsteadily into the boat, "[a]uf dem linken Arme das Kind, in der linken Hand das Buch, in der rechten das Ruder […] Das Ruder entfährt ihr, nach der einen Seite, und wie sie sich erhalten will, Kind und Buch, nach der andern, alles ins Wasser."[43] She at last manages to retrieve the child, but its breathing has already stopped; nevertheless, in a striking invocation of the *pietà*, Ottilie cradles the lifeless infant and presses it to her breast. This *Augenblick* thus draws to a close within a multilayered vignette of stasis: the distention of narrative time, the halted rhythm of young life, and the consciousness of irretrievable decision all come to rest in a single image—"Von allem abgesondert schwebt sie auf dem treulosen unzugänglichen Elemente […] Ohne Bewegung liegt das Kind in ihren Armen, ohne Bewegung steht der Kahn auf der Wasserfläche."[44]

In addition, this water becomes the locus of an interpenetration of law and human subjects, one which culminates in a drowning that bears sacrificial hallmarks. Benjamin himself gestures at this when he designates Ottilie's trajectory

> unverkennbar als Opferhandlung […] Also nicht allein als "Opfer des Geschicks" fällt Ottilie—geschweige daß sie wahrhaft sich selbst opfert—sondern unerbittlicher, genauer, als das Opfer zur Entsühnung der Schuldigen. Die Sühne nämlich ist im Sinne der mythischen Welt, die der Dichter beschwört, seit jeher der Tod des Unschuldigen. Daher stirbt Ottilie…trotz ihres Freitods als Märtyrerin.[45]

I feel it would be justified to redistribute the sacrificial emphasis that this reading places upon Ottilie's death at the end of the novel to the more immediate and consequential event of the child's drowning that in fact precipitates her "Freitod."[46] Indeed, she uses the language of *atonement*, not sacrifice, to describe the last phase of her own trajectory,

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[43] Ibid., 593.
[44] Ibid., 594.
[45] Benjamin 140.
[46] Cf. Norbert Bolz, "Ästhetisches Opfer. Die Formen der Wünsche in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*," in *Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften': kritische Modellen und Diskursanalysen zum Mythos Literatur*, ed. Norbert Bolz (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 69; Elisabeth Herrmann, *Die Todesproblematik in Goethes Roman "Die Wahlverwandtschaften"* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1998), 246-251; and Volkhard Wels, "Opfer und Erlösung: eine Auslegung von Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften* nach ihrer theologischen Begrifflichkeit," *Euphorion* 4.88 (1994): 409-414.

exclaiming to Charlotte that "'Gott [hat] mir die Augen geöffnet, in welchem Verbrechen ich befangen bin. Ich will es *büßen* […]'"[47] When read from this angle, Benjamin's understanding of sacrifice in terms of a "Tod des Unschuldigen" that functions "zur Entsühnung der Schuldigen" applies more organically to the child's death in water than to Ottilie's penitent askesis afterwards.

In another scene, the Major himself is shown to regard the drowning as a sacrifice, though he conceptualizes it as a sacrifice for his and Charlotte's future happiness rather than as a casualty of past passions; "Der Major entfernte sich…ohne jedoch das arme abgeschiedene Kind bedauern zu können. Ein solches Opfer schien ihm nötig zu ihrem allseitigen Glück."[48] Shortly thereafter, we learn that "[g]anz in der Stille hatte Charlotte das Kind nach der Kapelle gesendet. Es ruhte dort als das erste Opfer eines ahndungsvollen Verhängnisses."[49] Thus, while it is clear that the child's drowning can indeed be read as a sacrifice, it must be done so not in the sense that the Major does, nor in the one that Benjamin does, but instead in the one that Ottilie and the narrator both imply: insofar as the child's drowning results from her abandonment of moral law—symbolically marked by her abandonment of the path *around* the water[50]—it constitutes the forfeiture of an innocent life for which she subsequently feels she must atone.

The most crucial aspect of the drowning scene in Goethe's novel is that it establishes several formal conditions of literary depiction that will return in the drowning scenes of German Realism. Foremost among these is its introduction of a particular temporal and narrative structure of the *Augenblick*. In the scene we have just read, Ottilie assumes a position of observation between the water's surface and its depths, a diegetic

[47] Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, 599 (emphasis added).
[48] Ibid., 597.
[49] Ibid., 600.
[50] Idris Parry, "Footpath on the Water," in *Speak Silence. Essays* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1988), 23-24.

space of simultaneous dislocation from and anchorage within the present instant. In the texts under discussion in this dissertation, the reader (as well as characters) often slip into this space that is first occupied and held open by Goethe's Ottilie, a "Wasserraum" within which law, sacrifice, and the ethical will continue to converge.

While law assumes several forms in these texts (e.g., natural, societal, religious), sacrifice is consistently of a specific kind, appearing not in the mythic mode of violent immolation, but rather in the ethical mode of decision. More precisely, in these stories we find characters faced with the decision to offer up one form of law for the sake of another one, with death in water serving time and again as the extreme consequence of sacrificial choice. I suggest that it is this dynamic relation between order and offering—with the subjective interior hovering between them—that the realist symbolism of drowning configures.

Chapter 1 examines Adalbert Stifter's early prose (1842-1853), first tracing the theory of cosmic order that he developed in non-fictional writings on nature as well as in aesthetic principles such as his premise of *sanftes Gesetz*. I argue that these notions of a universal, underlying law all rest upon a system of invisible cause and visible effect. Crucially, Stifter presents self-sacrifice as the midpoint of this system, bridging the cosmic sphere of natural law and the human sphere of ethics and moral law. This motivic framework is then set in motion in the novella *Kalkstein*, which chronicles a country parson's abstemious and fervent commitment to protecting the parish children from drowning in the nearby river's regular floods. *Kalkstein* and its central water imagery are thus emblematic of Stifter's broader sacrificial aesthetics.

These themes are echoed in Gottfried Keller's novella *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (1856), which Chapter 2 argues to be structured around transgressive acts that consist not so much in overt contradictions of given legal tenets, but rather in the protagonists' imitation of lawful states of being, driven above all by the protagonists'

fervent desire for the community to acknowledge them as a properly married couple. However, the lawful status of bourgeois matrimony is occluded precisely by their simulation of this status. At the end, the protagonists' suicidal drowning on the periphery of the community constitutes a sacrifice of their wish for *public* recognition insofar as it is the culmination of an instant of *private*, reciprocal recognition. The tale ends with their suicidal drowning, which I interpret as a sacrifice of their wish for a publicly recognized, married life together in exchange for a momentary, private simulation of it on the banks of the river.

The narratives that occupy the second half of the dissertation develop these themes, gradually moving from the "external laws" of nature and social custom to the "inward laws" of ethical and moral obligation. Chapter 3 analyzes the later novellas of Theodor Storm (1872-1888), all of which brim with themes of guilt, memory, and contrition. Through close readings of three important narratives, I propose that in this last period of his writing and life, Storm portrays law as an inheritance of the past, while sacrifice serves as a retrospective means of atonement—a means, that is, of relating to one's future by looking back to the past from out of the present. Invariably, this present moment of sacrifice culminates in drowning.

At the end of the project, we will observe a shift from the Aristotelian and Vicoan realm of *nomos* and *lex* to a more Kantian paradigm of *Sittenlehre* in which law is no longer imposed by nature or an external societal structure, but rather by the subject upon itself. Chapter 4 considers Theodor Fontane's 1892 novel *Unwiederbringlich*, whose protagonist devotes her life to fulfilling Lutheran precepts of spiritual and moral duty, only to drown herself at the end. I understand this act in essence as a sacrificial exchange of moral paradigms, suggesting that by transgressing against a private system of duty, she ultimately aims to inculcate a collective model of duty rooted in the communal recognition of absence (specifically, through rites of mourning).

In the Epilogue, I situate the Realist drowning motif within a larger arc of German literary history, exploring how it falls between the Romantics' fascination with nyads, nymphs, and other *Wasserfrauen* as metaphors for the individual poetic imagination at the beginning of the century and the modernists' fixation upon Ophelia as an avatar of womanhood, societal alienation, and self-estrangement during the fin de siècle. From this vantage, the drowning scene of German Realism occupies an intriguing middle-space within modern German literature, a space located between Ottilie and Ophelia. Let us now turn to it.

Chapter 1

Quiet Currents: Order and Offering in the Early Writing of Adalbert Stifter

Deus sive natura.
—Spinoza[1]

Unter mir – ach, aus dem Licht verschwunden –
Träumen schon die schönern meiner Stunden.

Aus der blauen Tiefe ruft das Gestern:
Sind im Licht noch manche meiner Schwestern?
—Conrad Ferdinand Meyer[2]

Two months before his death, Adalbert Stifter penned the autobiographical account *Aus dem bairischen Walde* (1867), which documents the unprecedented snowstorm that swept down upon the Dreisesselberg region in November 1866. The effect that this *Dauerschneefall* and its "Bild des weißen Ungeheuers" had upon Stifter was due in part to its utter transformation of the woods near Lackenhäuser in which he had sought and found a source of tranquility and convalescence in the preceding months. This text was among the last works that Stifter completed in his lifetime, yet in certain passages devoted to the healing properties of the natural environment one can still recognize the principles of cosmic law that he had first formulated over thirty years before. One such passage describes the experience of walking into the forest:

> Man glaubt, die Welt ist voll Ruhe und Herrlichkeit. Und wenn man von dieser Ruhe in eine andere geht, in die des großen Waldes, so ist es wirklich wieder eine Ruhe und wirklich eine andere. Der Blick wird beschränkt, nur das Nächste dringt in das Auge, und ist doch wieder eine unfaßbare Menge der Dinge […] Wenn draußen das breite Meer des Lichtes war, so ist es hier in lauter Tropfen zersplittert, die in unzähligen Funken in dem Gezweige hängen, die Stämme betupfen, ein Wässerchen wie Silber blitzen machen, und auf Moossteinen wie grüne Feuer brennen. Oft, wenn eine Spalte ist, wird das Dunkel des Waldes durch eine glühende Linie geschnitten […] Und in alles tönt das ununterbrochene Rauschen der Wässer […] Da zeigt sich im Kleinsten die Größe der Allmacht.[3]

With these reflections upon how light and water serenely coalesce before the human eye, Stifter intimates a system of laws in which magnitude and simplicity become one and the

[1] *Ethics* (1677).
[2] Ln. 5-8, "Eingelegte Ruder" (1869).
[3] Adalbert Stifter, *Aus dem bairischen Walde*, in *Sämmtliche Werke* Bd. 15 *Vermischte Schriften II*, ed. Gustav Wilhelm (Reichenberg: Sudetendeutscher Verlag, 1935), 327-328.

same. As we shall see, it is a system that had remained notably consistent in its form and content throughout his life's work.

The present chapter looks to these two natural elements of light and water—and particularly their more disconcerting manifestations, such as solar eclipses and floods—as guiding motifs for its examination of Stifter's writings between 1842 and 1853. These two topoi enframe the central point of focus for my reading, namely the relation between law, as perceived in the natural world as well as in the human community, and self-sacrifice. In the first section of this chapter, I consider *Die Sonnenfinsterniß am 8. Juli 1842*, which makes a helpful entry point for our exploration of Stifter's work because it immediately presents its reader with a dynamic relationship between the sphere of nature, the sphere of human experience, and a hidden order of law that only becomes "visible" by seeming to be suspended. Moreover, this text establishes the motif of sacrifice (via the image of Christ's crucifixion) as a crucial element in Stifter's depiction of cosmic law, on the one hand, and in his depiction of how the human observer perceives this law to be in or out of effect, on the other.

In the second section, I then consider two important principles of cosmic law that Stifter developed during this same period: the *Blumenkette* (formulated in the introductory passages of his 1843 novella *Abdias*) and the *sanftes Gesetz* (laid out, similarly, in the preface to his 1853 novella cycle *Bunte Steine*). Both principles integrate notions of exception into their very understanding of lawfulness itself, and the *sanftes Gesetz* in particular occludes a codified space for the miracle insofar as it allows law, in a general sense, to seem simultaneously in effect and out of effect, but without being "suspended" by a supernatural force. In this phase of Stifter's thinking, universal law has begun to manifest itself in nature as well as in human actions, but by this very token it has also become possible for law to appear out of joint with itself from the vantage point of human perception and experience. Unlike cosmic phenomena, however, human behavior

is shown to have a special capacity not only to form a bridge between nature and ethics, but even to set universal law back into joint with itself. For Stifter, the domain of human action in which this becomes possible is love. In order to further unfold this thought, I draw upon Søren Kierkegaard's conceptualization of self-sacrifice and devotion to the other as the visible "fruit" by which an invisible, "royal Law" of love can be both identified and fulfilled.[4] However, while *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* first introduces sacrificiality within the context of light and shadow, the text that will occupy the focus of the second part of the chapter does so in terms of water—and more specifically, the risk of drowning.

The third section of the chapter focuses upon Stifter's 1853 novella *Kalkstein*, which tells the story of a country pastor's tireless and abstemious efforts to protect the parish children from the nearby river's regular floods. And this is where sacrifice becomes key for tracing Stifter's evolving depiction of law: whereas *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* uses the crucifixion to signal law's apparent suspension, in *Kalkstein* self-sacrifice evinces law's uninterrupted cohesion. This cohesion comes about in Stifter's writings when the potential for irregularity is incorporated into the very form of law. In the fictional world of *Kalkstein*, it is sacrifice that weaves irregularity into order, ultimately making it possible for exceptions of law nevertheless to become manifestations of lawfulness.

I.

Whatever their differences in hermeneutic opinion and approach, readers of Stifter often share the impression that in spite of his aesthetic program's predication upon an affinity for the natural world, many of his writings nevertheless convey a sense

[4] To a substantial degree, analyses of Stifter's early writing have not looked to Kierkegaard's philosophy as a point of reference. The primary exception to this trend remains Erik Lunding's early study *Adalbert Stifter. Mit einem Anhang über Kierkegaard und die existentielle Literaturwissenschaft* (Kjøbenhavn: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1946).

of *Unheimlichkeit* and disjunction with it. W. G. Sebald, for instance, would speak for many with his observation

> daß Stifter, bewegt von den chaotischen Vorgängen in seinem Inneren und von der naturwissenschaftlichen Einsicht in die grauenvolle Ausgesetztheit der Welt, zeit seines Lebens in einer Art literarischer Autotherapie an der Darstellung einer helleren Welt sich abgearbeitet hat.[5]

There is a certain amount of irony in the thought that Stifter's lifelong project was to portray a "brighter" world given that one of his earlier texts comprises a detailed and affect-laden description of a total solar eclipse. *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* establishes a correspondence between the natural phenomenon of sunlight and an assumed order of cosmic law. Crucially, at the instant of complete eclipse the text alludes to Christ's crucifixion, invoking the Christian paradigm of kenotic sacrifice shortly before going on to reflect upon whether the divine becomes most theophanically "visible" precisely within the apparent disappearance of nature's laws; i.e., within miracles.

"…ein Licht so wenig irdisch und so furchtbar…"[6]

An overarching duality that structures this text—and arguably the bulk of Stifter's work[7]—is the opposition between the rational, *a posteriori* understanding of a given natural phenomenon and the non-rational, even existential fear that it instills. As Martin and Erika Swales point out, Stifter was skeptical of exactly how much science could truly reveal about nature and expressed a faith that the "darkness" left by lacunae in scientific knowledge could be approached as indices of a divinely meaningful order.[8] Nevertheless, Stifter had studied several natural sciences including astronomy, and as a consequence he

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[5] W. G. Sebald, "Helle Bilder und dunkle: zur Dialektik der Eschatologie bei Stifter und Handke," in *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks: zur österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994), 174.
[6] Stifter, *Die Sonnenfinsterniß am 8. Juli 1842*, in *Sämmtliche Werke* Bd. 15 *Vermischte Schriften II*, ed. Gustav Wilhelm (Reichenberg: Sudetendeutscher Verlag, 1935), 5-16, here 12.
[7] In his incisive study, Friedrich Wilhelm Korff claims that this eclipse proved to be Stifter's definitive "Erlebnis, weil sich der Dichter damals in einem Zustand der Verödung befand, in einer Art dichterischen Entfernung von sich selbst, deren Überwindung von da an das innere Thema der Produktion wurde." Korff, *Diastole und Systole: zum Thema Jean Paul und Adalbert Stifter* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1969), 28.
[8] *Adalbert Stifter: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 29, 32-33.

was well acquainted with the causes and characteristics of a solar eclipse.[9] And yet, as he exclaims at the beginning of his account of the eclipse he witnessed in Vienna on 8 July 1842, "nie und nie in meinem ganzen Leben war ich so erschüttert, von Schauer und Erhabenheit so erschüttert, wie in diesen zwei Minuten—es war nicht anders, als hätte Gott auf einmal ein deutliches Wort gesprochen und ich hätte es verstanden" (6).[10]

The notion of divine revelation being conveyed through the fluctuations of sunlight has its own rich literary tradition,[11] and Stifter's pronounced use of Biblical and apocalyptic tropes in his descriptions of the spiritual anxiety that the eclipse instigated in him has led scholars to link *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* to this poeto-theological paradigm.[12] However, one obvious facet of Stifter's text that distinguishes it from strictly religious accounts of phenomena such as eclipses is its implicit suggestion that nature cannot be grasped solely with the instruments of reason or of religious faith, but instead with a cathartic synthesis of both frames of mind that leaves room for the one alternately to triumph over the other.

A fine illustration of this parallax is offered by Stifter's assertion that he had closely studied the empirical qualities of eclipses, "und zwar so gut, daß ich eine totale Sonnenfinsterniß im Voraus so treu beschreiben zu können vermeinte, als hätte ich sie bereits gesehen" (5). However, his subsequent depiction of the preliminary seconds of

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[9] Barbara Potthast, "'Ein lastend unheimliches Entfremden unserer Natur': Adalbert Stifters 'Die Sonnenfinsterniß am 8. Juli 1842' als Dokument einer anderen Moderne," *Scientia Poetica* 12 (2008): 122-123.

[10] For two readings of this text with attention to the significatory logic of language and textuality, see Christian Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen: Stifter-Lektüren* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995), 51-66; and Isolde Schiffermüller, "Sonnenfinsternis. Das Erhabene und das Unheimliche," in *Buchstäblichkeit und Bildlichkeit bei Adalbert Stifter. Dekonstruktive Lektüren* (Wien: Studien-Verlag, 1996), 31-50, esp. 40-46. For an earlier discussion of the Sublime and Uncanny in this text, see Eva Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen: Darstellungsproblematik und Sprachreflexion in der Prosa Adalbert Stifters* (München: Iudicum, 1992), 18-24.

[11] Potthast, "Stifters 'Die Sonnenfinsterniß,'" 128.

[12] One of the more frequently mentioned points of comparison in this vein is Jean Paul's *Die Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebäude herab* (1796). For a discussion of this particular intertextual relationship, see Korff, *Diastole und Systole*, 11-37. Also see Heinz J. Drügh, "Entblössung, Unterbrechung, Verfremdung: Die Struktur der Apokalypse in Adalbert Stifters Prosa," in *Apokalypse: der Anfang im Ende*, ed. Maria Moog-Grünwald and Verena Lobsien (Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 2003), 161-173.

the eclipse is devoid of the naturalistic *sangfroid* that this initial statement might lead one to expect:

> Endlich zur vorausgesagten Minute—gleichsam wie von einem unsichtbaren Engel empfing sie den sanften Todeskuß—ein feiner Streifen ihres Lichtes wich vor dem Hauche dieses Kusses zurück, der andere Rand wallte in dem Glase des Sternenrohres zart und golden fort— […] (8)

Here, the scientific precision of Stifter's act of observation through his telescope[13] "zur vorausgesagten Minute" joins forces with metaphor in order to make sense of an unprecedented experience. One is reminded of Michel de Certeau's allusion to metaphor as something that can travel across distances between (and even within) distinct swaths of knowledge and language, like a vehicle that moves along a "spatial trajectory."[14] In this brief passage, Stifter's chosen metaphor enables his language to traverse the gap between naturalistic knowledge drawn from observation and the inexplicable sphere of theophanic experience, just as his eye moves between two different images of the darkening sun: one in the expanse of the heavens and one in the small enclosure of the telescope lens. In this respect, the "unsichtbarem Engel" that is closely observed as it steadily envelops the sun with its "Todeskuß" is emblematic of much of Stifter's writing for its attempt to reconcile the predictable rhythms of nature with the mystery of an immanent law that seems to be at work behind things.

This fusion between different modalities of subjective perception is foregrounded in the climactic sequence of the text that describes the actual moment of eclipse: the darkness continues to eat away at the sun, and although Stifter knows this shadow to be "unser Mond…der schöne sanfte Mond," it nevertheless appears to him "wie ein böses Tier […] dies unheimliche, klumpenhafte, tief schwarze, vorrückende

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[13] For an analysis of the telescope as a medium for implementing orders of meaning and law in Stifter's writings, see Eric Downing, "Adalbert Stifter and the Scope of Realism," *The Germanic Review* 74.3 (1999): 229-241; and Martin Selge, *Adalbert Stifter: Poesie aus dem Geist der Naturwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1976), 22-37.

[14] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 115.

Ding" (9).[15] At last an eerie twilight spreads over the rooftops of Vienna, and Stifter notes how it is now possible to behold the sun with "das freie Auge," a detail that confirms the interruption of astronomical normalcy to correspond with an interruption of physiological normalcy as well—suddenly, in this climactic instant of cosmic exception, Stifter and all of his fellow citizens become able to gaze directly at the sun without having to look away (10).

However, this equivalence is swiftly upended in the instant of the sun's transition from a state of full obscuration to its re-emergence from behind the black orb of the moon, and the narrative accordingly shifts from the passive framework of human observation to the active framework of hierophany and revelation: "dieser Moment war es eigentlich, der wahrhaft herzzermalmend wirkte…es war der Moment, da Gott redete und die Menschen horchten" (11). Stifter describes how the gradual extinguishing of the light had transported him and his fellow spectators into "eine Art Tod," and how the withdrawal of this "heilige" light that is taken for granted throughout human life leaves an unfathomable lack and induces a "todesstille Majestät" (12). In a moment of utmost importance for our analysis, Stifter directly aligns this privation of light with Synoptic accounts of the eclipse during Christ's death on the cross when, as he quotes, "'die Sonne verfinsterte sich, die Erde bebte, die Todten standen aus den Gräbern auf, und der Vorhang des Tempels zeriß von oben bis unten'" (12-13).[16] What this Biblical allusion implicitly declares is that the liminal space of transition between darkness and

[15] This reference develops a well-established trope in literary portrayals of solar eclipses, particularly those with an implicit or explicit theological backdrop, that use the obscuration of the sun by the moon to emblematize a more cataclysmic estrangement of Creation and its hitherto familiar objects from human understanding. A prime example is the lamentation from Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (1671): "O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon, / Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse / Without all hope of day! / O first created Beam, and thou great Word, / Let there be light, and light was over all; / Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree? / The Sun to me is dark / And silent as the Moon / […]" (Ln. 80-87).

[16] This quotation combines several verses from different Gospels of the Zürich Bible – "Die Sonne verfinsterte sich" is from Luke 23:45, "die Erde bebte, die Todten standen aus den Gräbern auf" is a paraphrase of Matthew 27:52, and the final reference to the curtain of the temple is from the preceding verse in Matthew (27:51).

light—as well as between a quotidian and a miraculous register of experience—is occupied and mediated by sacrifice, and specifically kenosis.

The theological notion of kenosis (*κένωσις*), which translates literally to "emptying," has two traditional resonances. The first of these denotes a metaphysical process of "self-emptying," which in the Christian context pertains both to a withdrawal of God's absolute divinity in order to become human through the Incarnation, as well as to Christ's withdrawal of his own divine nature in order to suffer a mortal, self-sacrificial death. The second sense of kenosis concerns the ethical practice of *imitatio Christi* whereby one "empties" one's own comforts and desires for the sake of a fellow human being. As Paolo Diego Bubbio has argued, the concept and symbolism of kenotic sacrifice assumed an increasingly influential role in post-Kantian thought, and the majority of nineteenth-century German philosophers, theologians, and aestheticians regarded the figure of Christ—and particularly his crucifixion—as the *locus classicus* of both the supernatural and moral registers of kenosis.[17]

Stifter's decision to invoke the eclipse that supposedly accompanied Christ's death at the climax of his own description of the 1842 eclipse as an "allmälige[s] Sterben" of "holy" light thus gives sacrificiality an important position within the text's motivic economy (10). Equally important to this economy is, as the concluding paragraphs suggest, the coincidence of self-sacrifice with an "Aussetzen von Normalität"[18] that marks the simultaneous suspension of natural law and revelation of the God that created this law:

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[17] Bubbio argues in particular for acknowledging the centrality of sacrifice to Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* and *Philosophie der Religion*, and specifically its kenotic variation as an "emptying of the self" *qua* recognition of the other (61-85). On this reading, the climactic moment of kenosis within the teleology of Spirit occurs (for Hegel) in Christ's sacrifice of his own divine, absolute nature by becoming wholly human and dying in a pure recognition of humanity. Indeed, as Bubbio posits, "sacrifice becomes, for Hegel, the *Darstellung* of recognition" (144). Bubbio, *Sacrifice in the Post-Kantian Tradition: Perspectivism, Intersubjectivity and Recognition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014). Cf. Peter Szondi, *Versuch über das Tragische* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1964), 20-28.

[18] Jutta Müller-Tamm, "Farben, Sonne, Finsternis: von Goethe zu Adalbert Stifter," *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 125 (2008): 171.

> Warum, da doch alle Naturgesetze Wunder und Geschöpfe Gottes sind, merken wir sein Dasein in ihnen weniger, als wenn einmal eine plötzliche Aenderung, gleichsam eine Störung derselben geschieht, wo wir ihn dann plötzlich und mit Erschrecken dastehen sehen? Sind diese Gesetze sein glänzendes Kleid, das ihn bedeckt, und muß er es lüften, daß wir ihn selber schauen? (15)

This evocative passage raises the question of whether the disturbances and interruptions of Law, "da doch alle Naturgesetze Wunder und Geschöpfe Gottes sind," paradoxically allow us to see what would otherwise remain invisible to both our external and internal "vision." In this respect the text's conclusion echoes its own beginning, for in the opening passages of the essay Stifter had also used the distinction between vision and feeling—and specifically between the eyes and the heart—to illustrate the paradox of a rationally conceivable occurrence in nature nevertheless becoming incomprehensible to us. The specific word he uses to designate this natural phenomenon that at the same time seems to be supernatural is crucial: at the moment of the eclipse, he writes, "wir…richten unsere Augen und Sehröhre…gegen die Sonne, und…der Verstand triumphirt schon," and yet in this same moment, "eine solche moralische Gewalt ist in diesen physischen Hergang gelegt, daß er sich unserem Herzen zum unbegreiflichen *Wunder* emporthürmt" (6, emphasis added).

Solstitium*, *iustitium*, *eclipsis

Stifter's text thus circles around a central tension: even though the eclipse is understood rationally to accord with natural order, on a phenomenological level it nevertheless has the effect of a suspension of natural law—or, in Stifter's words, of a miracle. But does the miracle for Stifter constitute a divine suspension of natural order, or the very revelation of "true order" in what only *appears* to be a suspension? If, as he suggests above, God becomes most present and intelligible to man while seeming to dissolve rather than uphold his own cosmic laws, then any "true" experience of nature in turn becomes predicated upon the miraculous—i.e., upon an exception of law.

Stifter was certainly not the first, and by no means the last, to link the modality of exception to that of the miracle. Less than a century after *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* was published, Carl Schmitt would seize upon the religious category of the miracle in order to lay out the salient characteristics of his theory of *Ausnahmezustand*. While doing so, Schmitt famously claims that "Alle prägnanten Begriffe der modernen Staatslehre sind säkularisierte theologische Begriffe," and notes in particular the example in which "der allmächtige Gott zum omnipotenten Gesetzgeber wurde."[19] It is within the context of this shift in semantic register from divine power to legal authority that the relation between the miracle and the state of exception becomes clear: "Der Ausnahmezustand hat für die Jurisprudenz eine analoge Bedeutung wie das Wunder für die Theologie."[20]

The roots of this paradigm reach even deeper than the Judeo-Christian theological tradition, however. In point of fact, Giorgio Agamben has investigated the Roman-legal precursor to Schmitt's State of Exception, *iustitium*, which pertained to a "suspension not simply of the administration of justice but of the law as such."[21] Interestingly, Agamben notes that ancient jurists explicated the term *iustitium*—a compound derived from "law" (*ius*) and the verb "to stand still" (*sistere*)—through analogy with the etymologically related "solstice" (*solstitium*), during which the sun comes to a "standstill."[22] It is worth underscoring how in this particular instance of Western legal thought, the suspension or "standing still" of law is expressed not merely by way of metaphor, but by way of one tied to a natural—and specifically solar—phenomenon.

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[19] Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* (München/Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot), 1922, 37.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2005, 41.
[22] Ibid. This particular reference can be traced to the *Commenta Bernensia*, an anonymous tenth-century commentary on Lucan's *Pharsalia* (61/65 AD). In Book II of the *Commenta*, we find the following entry on the principle of *iustitium*: "*iustitium quando ius stat nec causa agitur, sicut solistitium dicitur*" ["*iustitium* is when law stands still, just like they say of the solstice, and no cases are pleaded"]. Hermann Usener, ed., *Scholia in Lucani bellum civile. Commenta Bernensia* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 49 (translation mine).

If we regard *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* alongside this context, Stifter's use of the eclipse as a topos suddenly takes on considerable implications. As Agamben and Schmitt respectively suggest, the Roman concept of *iustitium* and the theological concept of the miracle both form the backdrop to modern notions of law as something that can occasionally "stand still," as if enacting its own *solstitium*, or even give way to a state of exception established "durch einen unmittelbaren Eingriff," just like a miracle brought about via divine "Durchbrechung der Naturgesetze."[23] When viewed in this light, *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* falls in with a long tradition of portraying law's dual capacity to vanish and to be present, like the sun during an eclipse.[24]

II.

Stifter's text thus begins and ends with the same key question: how should we understand a phenomenon that simultaneously appears to correspond with the laws of nature and with a divine suspension of law itself? It is a question that is also voiced explicitly and implicitly in much of Stifter's work from this timeframe, including his metaphysical and aesthetic conceptions of cosmic law that are of concern to us in this chapter. The first of these is the principle of the *Blumenkette*, which is presented in the opening passages of the 1843 novella *Abdias*.[25]

"die Lücken, die jetzt sind…"

In this introductory section of *Abdias*, the narrator describes mankind's impression of nature's simultaneous visibility and obfuscation, as though an "unsichtbarer Arm" were

[23] Schmitt, *Politische Theologie*, ibid. Interestingly, the Greeks also used the sun as a trope when discussing the relationship between *nomos* and *physis*. As Hans Kelsen notes, Heraclitus' ninety-fourth fragment describes a scenario of the sun "transgressing" against the precepts of nature (*physis*) and then being corrected by law (*nomos*). Kelsen cites the passage from Heraclitus as follows: "'Wenn die Sonne ihren vorgeschriebenen Pfad nicht einhält, werden die Erinnyen, die Helfershelfer der Gerechtigkeit, sie zurechtweisen.'" Kelsen, *Reine Rechtslehre* (Wien: Deuticke, 1960), 88.

[24] "Eclipse" derives, via the Latin *eclipsis*, from the Greek *εκλειψις*, which means "disappearance" or "abandonment."

[25] Adalbert Stifter, *Werke und Briefe. Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 1.5, ed. Alfred Doppler and Wolfgang Frühwald (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1982), 235-342.

hidden behind the phenomena unfolding "vor unsern Augen" (237).[26] This seamless co-operation between the unseen and seemingly disinterested machinery of nature and its visible effects in the environment is illustrated with an unsettling allegory: "Dort, zum Beispiele, wallt ein Strom in schönem Silberspiegel, es fällt ein Knabe hinein, das Wasser kräuselt sich lieblich um seine Locken, er versinkt – und wieder nach einem Weilchen wallt der Silberspiegel, wie vorher" (ibid.).

The reader is first presented with the image of a tranquil river, whose quiet surface suddenly and for the briefest instant swells and parts to receive a young boy in a "loving" embrace that is redolent of the "Todeskuß" with which the sun was enveloped in *Die Sonnenfinsterniß*, before returning just as quickly to its previous stillness. In a markedly similar fashion as the eclipse of 1842, this tripartite movement of nature—though here water rather than light—comprises an oscillation between a visible topography, the sudden appearance and disappearance of an object, and a final reinstatement of the initial image. The text associates these linked movements with the equanimity of nature, whose regularity and normality can momentarily become host to an "unbegreifliche" or "entsetzliche" event that unexpectedly takes place.

The narrator notes how throughout human history, mankind has sought to explicate or at least reconcile nature's unpredictability with concepts such as blind fate (*fatum*), destiny (*Schicksal*), or divine will. While Stifter certainly seemed partial to the latter paradigm in his description of the 1842 eclipse, here his narrator opts for a system of disinterested cause and consequence, articulated with a striking metaphor:

> 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

[26] According to Peter Utz, the opposition between vision and blindness structures the entire *Blumenkette* principle. See Utz, "'Die Lücken, die jetzt sind': Visualität und Blindheit in den beiden Fassungen von Stifters 'Abdias,'" in *Blindheit in Literatur und Ästhetik (1750-1850)*, ed. Sabine Eickenrodt (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 255-256. Cf. Erika Tunner, "'Zum Sehen geboren, zum Schauen bestellt': Reflexionen zur Augensymbolik in Stifters *Studien*," *Etudes Germaniques* 40 (1985): 335-348.

> Seele, die Kette daran anzuknüpfen, und an ihr Blume um Blume, Glied um Glied hinab zu zählen bis zuletzt zu jener Hand, in der das Ende ruht. (238)

Several phrases immediately leap out at the reader, particularly the central idea that the "loveliest blossom" of this cosmic chain of flowers is contained within human reason—"das Auge der Seele."[27] The narrator claims that if one is successful in surveying the links of the *Blumenkette* with this psychic eye of reason, a full view of the true order of things can eventually be attained: "dann wird für uns kein Zufall mehr erscheinen, sondern Folgen, kein Unglück mehr, sondern nur Verschulden" (ibid.).[28] Here, as in the opening passage, the reign of normality and the regularity of truth are linked with a Platonic paradigm of visibility, and more specifically with both a metaphysical and metaphorical symbolism of visual access to nature. However, here too the "visible" realm of reason, understanding, and cosmic lawfulness is interwoven with an invisible patchwork of unknowability, for in surveying the *Blumenkette* of consequences and culpability that hangs in place of coincidence and ill fortune, mankind's inner eye will inevitably stumble across empty spaces that obtain between the blossoms of causal uniformity, and "die Lücken, die jetzt sind, erzeugen das Unerwartete."

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[27] A significant amount of critical discussion has surrounded the many plausible philosophical and epistemological forefathers of this "heitre Blumenkette," the most popular candidates being Spinoza, Leibniz and Herder. Especially influential hypotheses and overviews of this intellectual genealogy have been provided by: Sepp Domandl, "Die Idee des Schicksals bei Adalbert Stifter: Urphänomen oder Gegenstand der spekulativen Vernunft," *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 23 (1974): 81-99; Rudolf Jansen, "Die Quelle des 'Abdias' in den Entwürfen zur 'Scientia Generalis' von G. W. Leibniz?" *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 13.3/4 (1964): 57-69; Barbara Mariacher, "Zufall – das ungelenke Organ des Schicksals. Überlegungen zum Zufallsbegriff in der Erzählung *Abdias*," in *Geborgenheit und Gefährdung in der epischen und malerischen Welt Adalbert Stifters*, ed. Jattie Enklaar and Hans Ester (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 87-90; and Peter Schäublin, "Stifters *Abdias* von Herder aus gelesen," *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 24 (1974): 93-97.

[28] An early strain of scholarship devoted itself to this specific binary in Stifter's work, and while sustained analyses of "fate versus guilt" have not perdured as distinct topics of study among Stifter scholars, they nevertheless make frequent appearances within current criticism. See Josef Bindtner, *Adalbert Stifter: sein Leben und sein Werk* (Wien: E. Strache, 1928); Susi Gröble, *Schuld und Sühne im Werk Adalbert Stifters* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1965); Walter Hof, "Schuld und Schicksal in Stifters 'Abdias,'" in *Studien zur deutschen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Roether, 1964), 63-71; Anneliese Märkisch, *Das Problem des Schicksals bei Adalbert Stifter* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1941); and Gerhard Prause, *Das Problem der Schuld und die Möglichkeit des reinen Seins in der Dichtung Adalbert Stifters* (Ph.D diss., Universität Hamburg, 1955). Cf. Hans R. Klieneberger, "Stifter's *Abdias* and its Interpreters," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 14 (1978): 332-334.

The image invoked here seems straightforward enough: if causes and effects of events in the world are the blossoms forming a chain that hangs through time and space, and if the most beautiful blossom is the "Auge der Seele," or reason, then the gaps in this chain might also be understood as "blind spots" of the psychic eye that regards it.[29] Much like the "unsichtbarer Arm" that suddenly reaches out from a solitary cloud or the impassive currents of a river, the *Unerwartete* and *Unbegreifliche* are those invisible spaces in the chain that constitute the other half of the seeable, predictable, and comprehensible workings of nature and its familiar laws. The narrator provides a simple reason as to why these inexplicable and seemingly random blind spots can be accommodated within what is allegedly a cohesive chain of causes and consequences, namely that only a small proportion of the countless blossoms that comprise this great *Blumenkette* have yet been found and understood through the course of human history:

> So unermeßlich ist der Vorrath darum, damit ein jedes der kommenden Geschlechter etwas finden könne, – das kleine Aufgefundne ist schon ein großer herrlicher Reichthum, und immer größer immer herrlicher wird der Reichthum, je mehr da kommen, welche leben und enthüllen – und was noch erst die Woge aller Zukunft birgt, davon können wir wohl kaum das Tausendstel des Tausendstels ahnen. (238-239)

That which remains invisible, the text suggests, should not be thought of as a consequence of "blindness" or absent knowledge, but instead as a prelude to eventual "sight" and future discovery.

The idea with which the *Blumenkette* passage concludes is therefore that the terrifying and exceptional phenomena that appear to bespeak a disruption or disappearance of nature's governing principles are not actually aberrations, but instead merely seem so to human observers due to our finite and fixed vantage point in time and

[29] E. F. George argues that the overarching message of the *Blumenkette* principle is not that every event necessarily has a direct and discernible cause, but rather that all things in existence are related within a higher order of meaning, even if the conditions and intricacies of this relation cannot be determined by man. Johann Lachinger takes a firmer line, claiming that the *Blumenkette* should be interpreted in strict terms of cause and effect if it is to have any hermeneutic utility vis-à-vis Stifter's work. See George, "The Place of *Abdias* in Stifter's Thought and Work," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 3 (1967): 156; and Lachinger, "Adalbert Stifters 'Abdias': eine Interpretation," *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 18 (1969): 100.

space. This idea stands in subtle contrast to the musing in *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* as to whether God might be most "visible" to human experience precisely by way of the apparent disappearance of his laws, for what the narrator of *Abdias* suggests is that the interstitial gaps in the cosmic chain of causes and effects are temporarily veiled sites of an immanent (but not necessarily miraculous) logic.

These two texts thus underwrite an important distinction. Something in the experience of the eclipse cannot be reconciled with reason, for even though Stifter declares that he understands the cause of the eclipse, he still continues to feel the split between the scientific and the phenomenological perspectives. In the *Blumenkette*, by contrast, we are not dealing with the experience of a parallax between natural order and divine suspension, but instead with a continuum of human comprehension. At first glance, then, it would seem that the miraculous has fallen out of view and been replaced with nothing less than law itself; that which the spectator of the eclipse experiences as an "unbegreifliche[s] Wunder" is simply one of the *Blumenkette*'s many "Lücken." Or has "miracle" rather come to mean something else for Stifter? Perhaps it is now closer to Idris Parry's definition of the miracle as "something unusual but not unnatural," something that "does not uncover anything new; it reveals the marvelous which is always present but veiled and nameless."[30]

As with the concept of *iustitium*, here too a rich epistemology hovers in the background. Spinoza, for instance, adamantly claimed that miracles were not divine suspensions of natural law, but instead wholly "lawful" natural phenomena which mankind simply could not yet explain.[31] In Chapter VI of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza remarks that the majority of people believe God to be revealed via apparent violations of nature's laws (i.e., through miracles). This belief, Spinoza continues, rests on

[30] Idris Parry, "Stream and Rock," in *Speak Silence. Essays* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1988), 282.
[31] Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise and Political Treatise*, trans. R. H. M Elwes (New York: Dover, 2004), 81-84.

the implicit assumption that divine law and natural law are not conjoined. He takes the opposing view, arguing that nature's laws operate solely by virtue of divine will, and that since according to divine law everything willed by God is eternal and true, it follows that if any natural event were ever to "violate" natural law, it would also necessarily violate divine law (a logical impossibility, according to him). Nature is rather always at work in accordance with a set order of laws—whether or not we can perceive or comprehend it—and as such, "miracles are only intelligible as in relation to human opinions, and merely mean events of which the natural cause cannot be explained."[32] Consequently, Spinoza suggests that God's essence should be sought not in "miracles," but instead in "the fixed and immutable order of nature."

These opposed paradigms of the miracle, as modeled by Schmitt's *Ausnahmezustand* and Spinoza's *Tractatus*, prove to be helpful lenses through which to trace Stifter's own changing conceptualizations of cosmic law and theophany. Moreover, within this same change we can also observe a parallel shift in emphasis from supernatural exception to natural cohesion. To a significant degree, this has happened as part of a reconceptualization of law itself as something that no longer might seem to be suspended by a divine force, but instead as something that can integrate exception—or what appears to us as exception—*into itself*. One is subsequently led to wonder whether for Stifter this paradoxical capacity of law also extends to the human dimension, i.e., to the ethical realm, in addition to the natural realm. Stifter's theory of the Gentle Law, formulated in the foreword to his 1853 novella cycle *Bunte Steine*, addresses precisely this question while shifting focus from the sphere of cosmic law to that of ethical law.

[32] Ibid., 84.

"Das sanfte Gesetz zu erblicken"

Stifter's definition of the *sanftes Gesetz* begins in one of the more frequently quoted passages in all of his oeuvre, but as it contains the most concise summary of the central thesis and ethos of this principle, it is worth doing so once again here:

> Das Wehen der Luft das Rieseln des Wassers das Wachsen der Getreide das Wogen des Meeres das Grünen der Erde das Glänzen des Himmels das Schimmern der Gestirne halt 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. Sie kommen auf einzelnen Stellen vor und sind die Ergebnisse einseitiger Ursachen.[33]

The semantic inversion[34] of "klein" and "groß" that is the focal point of these lines is rooted within two fundamental premises: 1) that a higher degree of significance resides in totality than in singularity, and 2) that there is also a higher degree of significance in a cause than there is in its effect. For Stifter, the small and serene phenomena of nature are in some way "größer" than violent or traditionally sublime ones. This is because the unobtrusive regularity of, say, a murmuring stream evinces what Stifter regards as an underlying principle of reality itself. The sudden force of a flood, by contrast, evinces not regularity but singularity, and stands apart as an extreme *effect* of reality's "much higher laws" rather than an *embodiment* of these laws in their usual operativity.[35]

Before going any further, we must ask ourselves just how to understand these qualifications of "größer" and "höher," for if a gentle phenomenon is as much an effect of nature's "viel höhere Gesetze" as a violent phenomenon is, then by what metric does

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[33] Stifter, *Vorrede*, in *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe* (hereafter *HKG*) Bd. 2.2, 10.

[34] Cf. Jattie Enklaar, "Stifters Vorrede zu den *Bunten Steinen*: eine experimentelle Ethik?" in *Geborgenheit und Gefährdung in der epischen und malerischen Welt Adalbert Stifters* (cited in note 33 above), 47-50; and Frederick J. Stopp, "Die Symbolik in Stifters *Bunten Steinen,*" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 28 (1954): 165-167.

[35] Most scholars do not fail to point out that Stifter's tales typically turn upon decidedly ungentle and, in some cases, catastrophic workings of nature, and that the "Gentle" Law is thus more often vitiated than shown to be in effect. However, some critics such as Alfred Doppler and Eugen Thurnher have argued that the *sanftes Gesetz* should be read and interpreted on its own terms as part of a circumstantially specific polemical address to Stifter's readers and critics, and not as an overarching concept. See Doppler, "Das sanfte Gesetz und die unsanfte Natur in Stifters Erzählungen," in *Geborgenheit und Gefährdung* (cited above), 13-22; and Thurnher, "Stifters 'sanftes Gesetz,'" in *Unterscheidung und Bewahrung: Festschrift für Hermann Kunisch*, ed. Klaus Lasarowicz and Wolfgang Kron (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1961), 381-397.

the one become "größer" than the other? As it happens, this puzzling relation between the pairs *klein/groß* and *hoch/höher* also caught the attention of Walter Benjamin in a brief 1917 essay on Stifter's poetics.

In essence, Benjamin's critique turns upon the conviction that Stifter's work is grounded within a "Bahn falscher metaphysicher Grundüberzeugungen."[36] For Benjamin, this false path is especially evident in the *Vorrede*, though he finds it to course through most of Stifter's writing, suggesting that his ceaseless—in more modern terms one might say pathological, as Thomas Mann would later do[37]—attention to minutiae of the ordinary signals a hidden desperation to divert focus away from something else he does not wish to see.[38] However, Benjamin detects a certain exhaustion that drags at this effort from within, and cites the *Vorrede* as a case in point. In its opaque attributions of *klein, groß* and *hoch*, Benjamin finds a speculative relation between the small and the grand elements of nature that strikes him as "trügerisch, unwesentlich…relativ."[39] This faulty alignment becomes most troubling to Benjamin when, as he sees it, Stifter subsequently attempts to transpose the gentle simplicity of nature into "die großen Verhältnisse des Schicksals."[40] In his inability to discern or comprehend the boundary between these two spheres, Benjamin says, Stifter becomes servant to a "krampfartiger Impuls" to bind

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[36] Walter Benjamin, *Stifter*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. 2.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 608.

[37] Mann identified in Stifter's writing a "Neigung zum Exzessiven, Elementarischen, Katastrophalen, Pathologischen," in *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus: Roman eines Romans (1949)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 95.

[38] Eric Downing also makes note of the visual emphasis in this section of the *Vorrede*, particularly the opposition that is drawn between the external eye and the internal "eye of science." On Downing's reading, the fact that Stifter privileges this latter eye over the empirical eye reflects his projection of God as the guarantor of unity and transcendent meaning which the Realist "*Menschenforscher*" can investigate within the sphere of objective reality: "[The investigator's] vision first posits the order of God so that it may in turn become a reflective repetition." Downing, "Real and Recurrent Problems: Stifter's Preface to *Many-Colored Stones* (*Bunte Steine*)," in *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 32. Cf. Helena Ragg-Kirkby, "Warum nun dieses?: *Verblendung* and *Verschuldung* in the Stories of Adalbert Stifter," *German Life and Letters* 55.1 (2002): 31-32; and Wolfgang Preisendanz, "Die Erzählfunktion der Naturdarstellung bei Adalbert Stifter," *Wirkendes Wort* 16 (1966): 409-410.

[39] Benjamin, *Stifter*, ibid.

[40] Ibid. Cf. Sebald, "Bis an den Rand der Natur: Versuch über Stifter," in *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks*, 18. On the interpenetrations of Stifter's writing with Sebald's own, see Neil Christian Pages, "Tripping: On Sebald's Stifter," in *The Undiscover'd Country: W. G. Sebald and the Poetics of Travel*, ed. Markus Zisselsberger (New York: Camden House, 2010), 213-247.

Schicksal and "die sittliche Welt" to the natural world, a move which, he concedes, may at first glance appear harmless and quaint, but is in fact "dämonisch und gespenstisch."[41]

Although this is not the proper place to address the complex epistemology that informs Benjamin's objections to how Stifter conceptualizes *Schicksal*,[42] let us take as a cue his remark that Stifter sees the spheres of nature and ethics as closely linked. The schematic ranking of cause and effect in terms of the qualities *klein/groß/hoch* may have been nebulous from the vantage point of nature, but within an ethical context, as we shall see shortly, it comes into focus. This new vantage point will in turn provide a clearer view to how between 1842 and 1853 law takes on a new form for Stifter, no longer appearing as an order that simply stands in opposition to disorder or exception, but rather as an order that can incorporate exception *within* itself. By developing a concept of law that applies both to the natural environment and to human interaction, Stifter accords law a new potential to be in effect (in one domain) while simultaneously being out of effect (in the other).

Let us return to the *Vorrede* in order to observe how Stifter executes this shift in focus. As was the case in the natural sphere, in the societal sphere too that which is visible and tangible evinces a hidden order of laws standing behind it:

> So wie es in der äußeren Natur ist, so ist es auch in der inneren, in der des menschlichen Geschlechtes. Ein ganzes Leben voll Gerechtigkeit Einfachheit Bezwingung seiner selbst Verstandesgemäßigkeit Wirksamkeit in seinem Kreise Bewunderung des Schönen verbunden mit einem heiteren gelassenen Sterben halte ich für groß: mächtige Bewegungen des Gemüthes furchtbar einherrollenden Zorn die Begier nach Rache den entzündeten Geist, der nach Thätigkeit strebt, umreißt, ändert, zerstört und in der Erregung oft das eigene Leben hinwirft, halte ich nicht für größer, sondern für kleiner, da diese Dinge so gut nur Hervorbringungen einzelner und einseitiger Kräfte sind, wie Stürme feuerspeiende Berge Erdbeben. Wir wollen das sanfte Gesez zu erbliken suchen, wodurch das menschliche Geschlecht geleitet wird. (12)

In a key sense, then, the *Sittengesetz* and the *Naturgesetz* are essentially modulations of one another, mutually reflecting the invisible but ever-present Gentle Law.

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[41] Benjamin 609.

[42] According to Peter Demetz, many of Benjamin's qualms with the *Vorrede* (and other texts) spring from his conviction that Stifter possessed an "illegitimen Begriff der Schicksalhaftigkeit." Demetz, "Walter Benjamin als Leser Adalbert Stifters," *Neue Rundschau* 91.1 (1980): 148-162, here 151.

Stifter's description of the natural world's co-extension with human affect once again brings Spinoza to mind.[43] In the preface to part III of the *Ethics*, for instance, Spinoza writes that "nature's laws and ordinances, whereby all things come to pass and change from one form to another, are everywhere and always the same."[44] As a consequence, he says, these "universal laws" and principles of nature should also form the basis and "method of understanding the nature of all things whatsoever," including the spectrum of human passions. For Stifter, it is specifically the simple, everyday textures of feeling that add up to a totality in correspondence with both the form and content of the cosmic whole. By contrast, the violent and vitriolic expressions of human nature that Stifter lists are merely "Hervorbringungen einzelner und einseitiger Kräfte," extreme effects and isolated perversions of the regulating and mild force of the *sanftes Gesetz*, which Stifter at a later point in the text will call "das einzige Allgemeine das einzige Erhaltende und nie Endende" (13).

Predictably, the connotations evoked by this language of a never-ending, sustaining whole have attracted the attention of commentators. Walter Silz, for instance, observes that "there is a religious spirit in Stifter's love and respect for things, even the commonest ones, as exponents of the mysterious, still uncomprehended laws underlying all life."[45] Eric Downing similarly notes the spiritual tone of Stifter's references, though he is less prepared to take it at face value, suggesting instead that Stifter may secretly have sensed that "significance, meaning and law" are perhaps not immanent to reality

[43] Cf. Wolfgang Wittkowski, "Beware of the Beasts! Spinoza and the Elemental Passions in German Literature: Lessing, Goethe, Stifter," *Analecta Husserliana* 28 (1990): 179-184.
[44] Benedict de Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding/The Ethics/Correspondence*, trans. R. H. M Elwes (New York: Dover, 1955), 128.
[45] Walter Silz, "Stifter, *Abdias,*" in *Realism and Reality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 60. A number of critics have convened around the question of how to read Stifter's texts within a religious (and specifically Catholic) lens, though as the majority of them focus upon *Bergkristall*, I will not list them here. For an early study of Stifter's personal religiosity and its reflection in his writings, see Karl Josef Hahn, *Adalbert Stifter: religiöses Bewußtsein und dichterisches Werk* (Halle: Akademischer Verlag, 1938).

after all, which would have made the figure of God a necessary addition to his system in order to compensate for this "missing unity and law."[46]

Whether or not the religiosity with which Stifter drapes his descriptions of the *sanftes Gesetz* was consciously strategic in the way that Downing implies, its Christological bent becomes increasingly tangible as the *Vorrede* goes on. This is especially the case in the passages on ethical law, which Stifter argues to be most purely in effect within love, and particularly within reciprocal love:

> das Gesez…will, daß jeder…sich Liebe und Bewunderung seiner Mitmenschen erwerbe, daß er als Kleinod gehütet werde, wie jeder Mensch ein Kleinod für alle andern Menschen ist. Dieses Gesez liegt überall, wo Menschen neben Menschen wohnen, und es zeigt sich, wenn Menschen gegen Menschen wirken. Es liegt in der Liebe der Ehegatten zu einander in der Liebe der Eltern zu den Kindern der Kinder zu den Eltern in der Liebe der Geschwister der Freunde zu einander in der süßen Neigung beider Geschlechter… (12-13)

This juncture of the text introduces an important difference between the *Naturgesetz* and the *Sittengesetz*, and more specifically between the consequences of either one being disrupted. Unlike the violent phenomena of nature, which distort but do not necessarily "violate" the Gentle Law, Stifter assigns particularly grave implications to unethical human behavior that diverges from the *Sittengesetz*. Indeed, he encourages the *Menschenforscher* to "turn away" from such instances of infringement altogether:

> Wenn aber in diesen Bewegungen [in dem menschlichen Geschlechte] das Gesez des Rechtes und der Sitte nicht ersichtlich ist, wenn sie nach einseitigen und selbstsüchtigen Zweken ringen, dann wendet sich der Menschenforscher, wie gewaltig und furchtbar sie auch sein mögen, mit Ekel von ihnen ab, und betrachtet sie als ein Kleines als ein des Menschen Unwürdiges. (14)

The ethically "klein" is thus rooted for Stifter in self-interest. It warrants noting that here the concept of *Einseitigkeit* is reiterated for a third time as an index of those "small" forces that oppose the Gentle Law. It was seen in the denunciation first of violent natural occurrences as "Ergebnisse einseitiger Ursachen" (10), and then of incontinent or intemperate human action as products of "einzelner und einseitiger Kräfte" (12). Here it

[46] Downing, "Stifter's Preface to *Many-Colored Stones* (*Bunte Steine*)," 31.

is "einseitigen und selbstsüchtigen Zwecken" that render the *Sittengesetz* "nicht ersichtlich."

Somewhat surprisingly, Stifter seems to regard the case of lawfulness being "unseen" in the realm of ethics as more hazardous than sublimely terrifying and deleterious occurences in the natural world. Although the text goes on to affirm optimistically that the "Rechts- und Sittengesetz" will always triumph in the end,[47] one might nevertheless ask why Stifter feels unethical behavior to pose such a threat to it. Why should the *Menschenforscher* "turn away in disgust" from this very specific variety of "smallness" within the sphere of human relationships, but not necessarily from "small" events that occur in the landscape?

One explanation for why *einseitige* and *selbstsüchtige* behavior might be considered to be more dangerous than natural catastrophes can be sought in the duality of cause and effect that underwrites the entire *Vorrede*. Whereas violent or destructive events in nature were defined as simply extreme products or effects (*Wirkungen*, *Ergebnisse*) of primary forces, human actions or motivations that are antithetical to the Gentle Law are not merely effects of it. Rather, by virtue of free will[48] these behaviors can become singular and independent causes unto themselves, for a person can choose to act unilaterally out of his or her own self-interest in contradiction to the *Sittengesetz*. By contrast, a bolt of lightning is not spoken of as "transgressing" against the *Naturgesetz* by "deciding" to

[47] Hartmut Laufhütte is among the less convinced readers of Stifter in this regard, making a stark argument against evidence of any "Harmoniezusammenhang" between man and nature in Stifter's world and dismissing both the *sanftes Gesetz* and *Blumenkette* as indices of an "irrealitätsverdächtiger Wunschtraum" (114). Laufhütte, "Harmoniemetaphern gegen das Chaos – Naturkonzepte und ihre Funktionalisierung bei Adalbert Stifter und Gottfried Keller," in *Geborgenheit und Gefährdung* (cited above), 107-120. Also see Alfred Doppler, "Schrecklich schöne Welt? Stifters fragwürdige Analogie von Natur- und Sittengesetz," in *Adalbert Stifters schrecklich schöne Welt. Beiträge des internationalen Kolloquiums zur A. Stifter-Ausstellung (Universität Antwerpen 1993)*, ed. Rudolf Kern (Linz: Schriftenreihe des Adalbert-Stifter-Institutes des Landes Oberösterreich, 1994), 9-15.

[48] Martin Beckmann's analysis of *sanftes Gesetz* focuses upon the importance of individual free will in particular, though the purposes of his argument differ largely from my own. He suggests that the Gentle Law ultimately aims at a synthesis of material necessity and individual possibility, which the human subject is enjoined to achieve by re-duplicating himself within the world *as* this synthetic reconciliation. That is, the individual is both a creature determined by external circumstances as well as a creature that has the freedom to become its true self. Beckmann, "Stifters 'sanftes Gesetz': Selbstwiederholung in der Wirklichkeit," *Neophilologus* 80.3 (1996): 435-459.

strike a house.[49] As was shown in the description of the *Blumenkette*, the terror of the "unsichtbarer Arm" is that even as it extends into the world in order to upend, destroy, and bereave, nature's "gelassene Unschuld" remains unstained. The terror of human will is precisely the opposite, however: when man goes astray of the *Sittengesetz*, *he* is the cause of it, not the true and essentially gentle law which he freely violates.[50] One might say it is man's "*sicht*barer Arm" and "*un*gelassene *Schuld*" that together render "das Gesez des Rechtes und der Sitte nicht ersichtlich" (14). Just as the gaps in the *Blumenkette* that baffle or frighten us nevertheless constitute a part of its causal chain, so too are the ungentle and unlovely incidents in nature ramifications of a single cosmic order. As a consequence, the ethical domain of human impulse and decision seems to possess a uniquely autonomous potency for Stifter—namely, the capacity either to accord with the law alongside its other effects, or to diverge from it as a self-governing cause. If regularity and predictability epitomize the *sanftes Gesetz*, then it is understandable that the caprice and unpredictability of the human heart provide the most apt conditions for the Gentle Law to be disrupted on the level of *Sittengesetz*.[51]

Perhaps Stifter designates *Einseitigkeit* and *Selbstsüchtigkeit* as the prime culprits in ethical law becoming "nicht ersichtlich" because both of them militate against the conditions for love—a concern that has clear echoes within the overarching didactic

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[49] Helena Ragg-Kirkby makes the similar point that many of Stifter's stories point directly to the idea that humans follow and disobey laws that are entirely separate from nature, whereas nature does not "follow laws," but simply exists. See 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* 72.4 (1999): 354-355.

[50] Alice Bolterauer portrays this dialectic along similar lines: "Das Große kann nur durch das Kleine ausgeglichen werden. Die durch das Große – große Leidenschaften, große Begierden, große Ansprüche – bewirkte Katastrophe kann nur durch das so genannte Kleine – Vernünftigkeit, Selbstbeherrschung, Pflichterfüllung – kompensiert und letztlich auch so repariert werden." Bolterauer, *Ritual und Ritualität bei Adalbert Stifter* (Wien: Edition Praesens, 2005), 129.

[51] Hans Dietrich Irmscher underscores the "rigorism" that becomes a necessary characteristic of any individual who desires to act and live in accordance with the law in Stifter's world, noting how it consequently "nur zu verstehen ist aus einer elementaren Angst Stifters vor einer Auflösung der Bande, die menschliches Zusammenleben erst ermöglichen." Irmscher, *Adalbert Stifter: Wirklichkeitserfahrung und gegenständliche Darstellung* (München: Winkler Verlag, 1971), 50. Cf. Bolterauer, *Ritual und Ritualität bei Adalbert Stifter*, 172-180, 407-412.

project of Biedermeier literature more generally.[52] This issue of law becoming non-visible in the ethical realm invites us to recall the *Sonnenfinsterniß* essay's description of a similar scenario in the domain of natural law. As we saw, the 1842 eclipse was a natural phenomenon, but one so moving that it nevertheless created the sense of natural law having been suspended by a divine hand. Stifter's subsequent reference to the crucifixion introduced the category of sacrifice as a kind of bridge extending through the now darkened horizon of natural law to affirm a link between human existence and a hitherto veiled order of divine law. In the 1853 *Vorrede*, by comparison, Stifter specifically refers to law becoming non-visible within the ethical realm, whose guiding *Sittengesetz* is linked to neighborly love. Might self-sacrifice therefore also play a role here, not only in bridging the realms of nature and ethics, but also in somehow allowing a "shadowed" law to become illuminated and visible once more?

III.

Although several novellas in *Bunte Steine* are rich with the Christological motifs of sacrifice alluded to in *Die Sonnenfinsterniß*, *Kalkstein* is an especially fruitful point of comparison. In this tale, beneficent acts that appear as works and gestures of selfless love not only emerge as the mode in which the human subject might reconcile itself with apparent "suspensions" of law in the cosmos, but also as the proper register of ethical action in which to redress interruptions of both the *Natur-* and *Sittengesetz*. Most importantly, this dynamic relation between sacrifice and law ultimately inverts the categories that Stifter had established as a foundation of the *sanftes Gesetz* at the beginning

[52] Friedrich Sengle delineates the ethical, political, and aesthetic stakes of this message in postlapsarian terms that echo those to be found throughout Stifter's writings: "Der Biedermeierdichter betrachtet das Selbstbewußtsein, das zur Absonderung vom Volke, zur Einsamkeit und Unzufriedenheit führt, als *Sündenfall*" (my emphasis). Sengle, *Biedermeierzeit: deutsche Literatur im Spannungsfeld zwischen Restauration und Revolution 1815-1848* Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Buchhandlung, 1971), 127. Cf. Martin Tielke, *Sanftes Gesetz und historische Notwendigkeit: Adalbert Stifter zwischen Restauration und Revolution* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1979).

of the *Vorrede*: through acts of self-sacrifice, effects will become "höher" than their causes.

Ultimately, pursuing this angle will allow us to see how Stifter looks to the narrative arc of an individual life—and particularly the assembly of actions that form its stage—as a space within which the much larger apparatus of natural order can be glimpsed in miniature. Hannah Arendt beautifully encapsulates a sentiment we will soon observe to be quite akin to Stifter's own in her thesis that "just as, from the standpoint of nature, the rectiliner movement of man's life-span between birth and death looks like a peculiar deviation from the common natural rule of cyclical movement, thus action, seen from the viewpoint of the automatic processes which seem to determine the course of the world, looks like a miracle."[53]

Messkunst

One can approach *Kalkstein* as a narrative composed of two principle elements: the now familiar dialectic of hidden or "unseen" causes and their perceivable effects, on the one hand, and the two protagonists' variant attempts to resolve this dialectic, on the other. Both of these elements are introduced in the opening passages of the story, which begins with a recollection of several friends debating how to account for the distribution of capacities in each individual. Some point out that man's abilities typically exist either in relatively equal proportion with one another, or in decidedly disproportionate constellations. Others suggest that the presence or absence of reason, as the foremost human trait, necessarily determines the operation of all the others. The frame narrator is only inspired to begin his story, however, after a member of the company hypothesizes that

[53] Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 246.

> Gott habe die Menschen erschaffen, wie er sie erschaffen habe, man könne nicht wissen, wie er die Gaben vertheilt habe, und könne darüber nicht hadern, weil es ungewiß sei, was in der Zukunft in dieser Beziehung noch zum Vorschein kommen könne.[54]

This division of an unseen, interior quality and its exterior, visible manifestations within human action will prove decisive not only for the role of the narrative's two main figures—a country pastor and a land surveyor (who is the narrator)—but also for the function of sacrifice that determines their respective experiences of the core events in the plot. This becomes particularly evident if one reads the pastor's acts of sacrifice and self-abnegation alongside Kierkegaard's 1847 treatise *Works of Love*, which posits that love, like the Biblical proverb that a tree can only be known by its fruits, is a hidden force that can only be recognized by way of its external effects—that is, within human works and deeds.[55]

Before proceeding further with Kierkegaard, however, it is worth pausing briefly in order to acknowledge the paradigmatically Augustinian dimensions of love in Stifter's system, particularly with respect to its centrality for the *Sittengesetz*. By distinguishing between "klein" and "groß" forms of mankind's co-existence with both the natural world and other human beings, Stifter clearly evokes Augustine's own distinction between *cupiditas* and *caritas* as, respectively, a desire that tends towards the self and a self-denying love that tends towards the other (and thereby the whole). Nevertheless, in order to get a better grasp of how sacrifice functions within this conception of love, it will be helpful to turn from Stifter's Catholic roots to the Protestant stringency of his Danish contemporary.

Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* proves especially useful for comparing the *Sittengesetz* with the events related in *Kalkstein* vis-à-vis the theme of sacrifice, as it underscores a

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[54] Stifter, *Kalkstein*, in *HKG* Bd. 2.2, 63-64.

[55] Kierkegaard begins his book with this quote from Luke 6:44, declaring that "every tree is known by its *own* fruit […] we are also saying that in a certain sense love itself is hidden and therefore is known only by its revealing fruits." Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed./trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 7-8 (emphasis in the original).

crucial distinction between traditional forms of reciprocal sacrifice and works of "true" (i.e., kenotic) sacrifice, the latter of which Kierkegaard roots in the commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Like Stifter's definition of the *Sittengesetz*, Kierkegaard's concept of a work of love is closely linked to his conception of law; indeed, he defines the Biblical imperative to love as the "royal Law."[56] Kierkegaard interprets this injunction as suggesting that to fulfill the law by loving one's neighbor as oneself is, concomitantly, to love oneself in the proper way, i.e., "as a neighbor."[57] In turn, what this "royal Law" inveighs against above all else is selfishness, just as Stifter identifies *Selbstsüchtigkeit* and *Einseitigkeit* as the primary banes of the *Sittengesetz*.[58]

The works which Stifter's pastor—as the eponymous *armer Wohltäter* of the original edition of the text[59]—performs are outwardly determined by a sacrificial denial of his own health and comforts for the sake of another. These acts are related by the tale's narrator, who can be (and has been) understood as an exemplum of Stifter's programmatic *Menschenforscher*, for in addition to his formal occupation as a land surveyor, he also performs an aesthetic and ethical function as a surveyor of mankind.[60] The kind of writer Stifter describes in the *Vorrede* is one whose observation of the patterns of reality is intrinsically linked to acts of contemplation within the theater of both human and natural dramas.[61] The narrator's most crucial observation relates to the central leitmotif in the entire narrative, namely the fine white linen that emerges as the sole luxury the pastor allows himself to own and enjoy. The very first time the narrator

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[56] *Works of Love*, 61.
[57] Ibid., 20-23.
[58] Ibid., 52-53.
[59] The original *Journalfassung* of 1848 was entitled *Der arme Wohltäter*. For a formal comparison of both versions of the story, see Rainer Rath, "Zufall und Notwendigkeit: Bemerkungen zu den beiden Fassungen von Stifters Erzählung 'Der arme Wohltäter' (I) und 'Kalkstein' (II)," *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 13 (1964): 70-80.
[60] Cf. Birgit Ehlbeck, "Zur poetologischen Funktionalisierung des Empirismus am Beispiel von Stifters 'Kalkstein' und 'Witiko,'" in *Adalbert Stifter: Dichter und Maler, Denkmalpfleger und Schulmann. Neue Zugänge zu seinem Werk*, ed. Hartmut Laufhütte and Karl Möseneder (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), 457-464.
[61] I purposely invoke the ancient etymology of "theater" (*theatron*) here given that Stifter's aesthetic program bases itself so specifically upon contemplation and speculation (*theoria*), acts which are rooted in the observation (*theorein*) of nature and human behavior.

sees him, he makes careful note of the latter's composure and black attire, save for "zwei winzig kleinen Läppchen von weißer Farbe – das einzige Weiße, das er an sich hatte…" (65). The narrator then notices that "Bei den Ärmeln gingen, wie er so saß, manchmal ein ganz klein wenig eine Art Handkrausen hervor, die er immer bemüht war wieder heimlich zurük zu schieben" (ibid.). Years later, after the two men have established a friendship and begin to meet routinely, we are told that the narrator recalls having "…bemerkt, daß der arme Pfarrer immer heimlich die Handkrausen seines Hemdes in die Rokärmel zurük schiebe, als hätte er sich ihrer zu schämen. Dasselbe that er auch jetzt immer" (72). Later, while taking shelter from a thunderstorm in the pastor's home, the narrator is given a glimpse of the status that this concealed fabric holds for his host, who bustles about preparing a makeshift bed:

> Dann öffnete er einen der gelben Schreine, nahm ein Leintuch von außerordentlicher Schönheit Feinheit und Weiße heraus…Als ich bei dem schwachen Scheine der Kerze die ungemeine Trefflichkeit des Linnenstückes gesehen, und dann unwillkürlich meine Augen auf ihn gewendet hatte, erröthete er in seinem Angesichte. (80-81)

As will gradually become apparent, this exterior, visible realm of effects and actions is consistently juxtaposed with a non-visible, subterranean realm of motivation and unspoken intention. This contrast is equally operative in the domain of nature, as indicated in an early remark by the pastor that the austere landscape of Kar "ist, wie sie Gott erschaffen hat" (69). This nearly verbatim iteration of the introductory frame's description of the division between man's hidden facets and their observable manifestations implies that the narrator's function as a *Vermesser* applies to both the geographical and the human landscape.[62] It is in the former, external sphere that this division is first portrayed.

On the morning following the torrential thunderstorm, the narrator gazes through the window of the rectory, where he had stayed the night at the pastor's insistence. The day is clear and pristine, and the pastor points out "mehrere Stellen sehr

[62] Cf. Martin and Erika Swales, *Adalbert Stifter*, 207.

entfernter Gegenden, die man sonst nicht sehen konnte, die aber heute deutlich in der gereinigten Luft wie klare Bilder zu erbliken waren" (86). This unobstructed field of visibility instills in the narrator a sense of nature's immensity as he surveys the vista before him. He looks into the crystalline sky, watching as "die Sonne erhob sich strahlend in einem unermeßlichen Blau," and reflects upon the thunderstorm's origins within the "unsichtbaren Düntse des Himmels" that had quietly compounded "in dem unermeßlichen Raume" during the previous day until, at last, "der unermeßliche Regen der Nacht" dispersed them and cleansed the sweltering air (84-85). The triple repetition of "unermeßlich" signals that the narrator—a practitioner of "Meßkunst"[63] by both trade and diegetic function—here confronts an aspect of nature that cannot be uniformly (let alone mimetically) depicted.[64] This *Unermeßlichkeit* will also inform the hidden, interior topography of human motivation that comprises the other half of the narrative's core theme. However, before we can adequately analyze both halves together, we must first consider more thoroughly the natural elements that form the stage for the story's central scenes.

As in *Die Sonnenfinsterniß*, light plays an important symbolic role. On the day of the thunderstorm, for example, an oppressive heat is accompanied by a "wesenloses Licht" that drenches the bare land, yet the sun cannot be located at a distinct point in the sky (73). Rather, this "sehr sonderbares bleifarbenes Licht" seeps over every surface of Kar, just as the storm's lightning is later described to be "nur ein ausgebreitetes allgemeines Aufleuchten" (77). Like the uncanny twilight that both illuminates and enshrouds Vienna during the eclipse of 1842, this "essenceless" light pervades everything and washes objects of their contours and distinctions. It is then juxtaposed with the

[63] The narrator prefaces his account by addressing the listeners, saying "Ihr wißt alle…daß ich mich schon seit vielen Jahren mit der Meßkunst beschäftige…" (64).
[64] The question of whether or not the narrator's powers of perception can be relied upon—or even whether or not the intentions behind his account of events should be trusted—has often occupied commentators. For a reading devoted to this issue, see Eve Mason, "Die Gestalt des Erzählers in Stifters 'Kalkstein,'" *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 33 (1984): 123-140.

smaller, beneficent forms of light that appear in the pastor's domestic rituals. For instance, as the storm gathers and the two men have installed themselves in the pastor's sitting room, he tells the narrator "daß es seine Gewohnheit sei, bei nächtlichen Gewittern ein Kerzenlicht auf den Tisch zu stellen, und bei dem Lichte ruhig sitzen zu bleiben" (76). This contrast between the habitual candlelight and the intermittent flashes of lightning from the storm outside recalls the contrast between the constancy demanded by the *Sittengesetz* and the exceptions occasionally entailed by the *Naturgesetz*.[65] Most importantly, as in *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* this strange light prefigures sacrifice; unlike *Die Sonnenfinsterniß*, however, here the natural element that will occasion the most revelatory view into the relation between the cosmic and the human is not light, but water.

"Gruben und Vertiefungen"

As a case in point, *Kalkstein* places the topos of the river in the foreground of its thematic framework of sacrifice and abstention.[66] A symbolic affinity between water and self-imposed order is subtly choreographed to come into focus gradually. Stifter initially portrays the river as an agent of restraint by having it function as the topographical border of the tale itself. The water physically demarcates the terrain of Kar, a bare and low-lying region that strikes the narrator on his first visit as "fürchterlich" (67). He notes that he is partial to "Wildnesse Schlünde Abgründe Felsen und stürzende Wässer," and therefore the uniform and slack lines of the landscape cause him a certain degree of unease. Indeed, the river and its currents are the sole source of "Abwechslung und Erquickung" in this otherwise undifferentiated environment of pale limestone slopes and silent space devoid of middle distance or natural objects to occupy the surveyor's eye

[65] Cf. Claudia Nitschke, "Chaos und Form, Raum und Ethos in Stifters *Bunte Steine*," *German Life and Letters* 68.4 (2015): 561; John Reddick, "Tiger und Tugend in Stifters 'Kalkstein': eine Polemik," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 95 (1976): 253; and Swales, *Adalbert Stifter*, 216.
[66] Cf. Frederick C. Stopp, "The Symbolism of Stifter's *Kalkstein*," *German Life and Letters* 7.2 (1954): 120.

(ibid.).[67] The violent storm and flood, as archetypically ungentle manifestations of Stifter's *Naturgesetz*, thus stand at the opposite extreme from Kar's pervasively monochrome and unchanging forms.

In addition to offering visual *Erquickung* and *Abwechslung*, the river's current also becomes an element of *interrupted* predictability, repetition, and habit by bursting its banks and threatening the local inhabitants. The water is also described to merge with light at decisive moments of the story, such as in the flooding of the meadow that results from the ferocious thunderstorm. The sight has a marked aesthetic impact upon the narrator due to the combined ability of water and light to uniformly envelop and re-determine a formerly innocuous space with a new beauty:

> [Der Fluss] war ausgetreten, und setzte einen Theil der Wiese…unter Wasser […] Allein, wenn man von dem Schaden absieht, den die Überschwemmung…verursacht haben mochte, so war auch diese Erscheinung schön. Die große Wasserfläche glänzte unter den Strahlen der Sonne, sie machte zu dem Grün der Wiese und dem Grau der Steine den dritten stimmenden und schimmernden Klang, und der Steg stand abenteuerlich wie eine dunkle Linie über dem silbernen Spiegel (85-86).

This passage immediately evokes (or rather anticipates) Stifter's 1867 portrayal of the optimal *Ruhe* that he would find in the Lackenhäuser woods, where "das breite Meer" of sunlight is transposed into "lauter Tropfen" by the forest's objects and shadows, such that "das Dunkel des Waldes durch eine glühende Linie geschnitten [wird]." However, a more specific figural characteristic of water is at the fore of *Kalkstein*, namely its bifurcation of the perceived world into the visible space above the surface and the non-visible domain beneath the surface.[68] Fittingly, it is precisely this dichotomy that determines self-sacrifice throughout the narrative.

The key scene takes place in this flooded meadow and is an emblematic instance of the pastor's self-giving nature that we have observed up to this point. After all, his

[67] For a discussion of the structural and thematic importance of the narrator's perspective—with respect both to his professional knowledge of geology as well as his subjective experience of the landscape more generally—see Selge, *Adalbert Stifter: Poesie aus dem Geist der Naturwissenschaft*, 61-64.
[68] To my knowledge, John Reddick (1976) was the first to emphasize this detail as a hermeneutic cornerstone of the pastor's and the story's trajectory, and nearly all critics since have followed his cue in underscoring it in their respective analyses. I wholeheartedly do the same here.

offer to shelter the narrator from the storm the night before had fulfilled a central tenet of the *Sittengesetz*, as signaled by the pastor's response to the narrator's gratitude with the words "Ich habe gegeben, was ich gehabt habe […] Menschen leben nebeneinander, und können sich manche Gefallen tun" (86). However, we learn early in the text that the pastor does not have very much to begin with; at several points the narrator makes note of the pastor's abstention from physical comforts. For instance, he has neither a bed nor a pillow, but has instead accustomed himself to sleeping every night on the hard bench of his table, with a Bible propped under his head (82). He is also abstemious with food and drink, eating sparingly from his habitual meal of bread, strawberries and milk (78, 80).

After the narrator has taken his leave of the pastor and is making his way homeward, he notices that children have begun to assemble on the opposite shore of the swollen river. They seem to be preparing to ford the currents, removing their shoes and stockings and beginning to wade into the water from the nearly submerged footbridge; and then, suddenly,

> Zu meinem Erstaunen erblikte ich jetzt auch mitten im Wasser eine größere schwarze Gestalt, die niemand anderer als der arme Pfarrer im Kar war. Er stand fast bis auf die Hüften im Wasser. Ich hatte ihn früher nicht gesehen, und auch nicht wahrgenommen, wie er hinein gekommen war, weil ich mit meinen Augen immer weiterhin gegen den Steg geblikt hatte, und sie erst jetzt mehr nach vorn richtete, wie die Kinder gegen meinen Standpunkt heran schritten. (88-89)

It is only when the narrator encounters the pastor soon afterwards that he discovers the reason for the remarkable spectacle he has just witnessed. The pastor explains that hollows and craters had been left in the meadow after the local farmer extracted stones from the soil, and that because the ground is now inundated with rushing water, the children might have unwittingly waded into the indentations and slipped beneath the surface—

> Deßhalb habe er sich zu der Grube stellen wollen, um alle Gefahr zu verhindern. Da sie aber abschüssig war, sei er selber in die Grube geglitten, und einmal darin stehend sei er auch darin stehen geblieben. Eines der kleineren Kinder hätte in der Grube sogar

> ertrinken können…denn das Wasser bei Überschwemmungen sei trüb, und lasse die Tiefe und Ungleichheit des Bodens unter sich nicht bemerken (91-92).

What the narrator had observed was therefore the pastor's efforts to safeguard the children against the risk of drowning that had resulted from the opaque water's obscuration of the uneven ground below. In addition to this literal lack of visibility,[69] the narrator is also unable at first to deduce the reason for the pastor's presence in the water. The formal characteristics of this vignette recall Hans Blumenberg's analysis of the division between land and sea, and more specifically of the ancient topos of a shipwreck seen from the shore. For Blumenberg, the metaphorical salience of this image is rooted in the elemental boundary between land as the symbolic domain of lived experience, subjective perception, and contemplation, and the water as the symbolic domain of that which is exterior to one's perception and thought—of that which can be "seen" but not wholly known. In short, the metaphor of beholding another's peril in the water from a removed and secure vantage point relates to a foundational ontological division in subjective experience between the "von innen unerreichbaren Außen" and "das von außen unerreichbare Innen."[70]

What the narrator witnesses from land could thus be described as the pastor's mediation of the symbolic dichotomy inherent to water, for he physically bridges the division between the unseen realm beneath the surface that is proper to death and the unknown, and the visible realm above it that is proper to life and recognition. The pastor's literal (and littoral) suspension between water and light foregrounds him as a

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[69] This correlation between visibility and the ability to accurately interpret the "signs" of nature is emblematic of a semiotic dimension to Stifter's oeuvre that has occupied the attention of numerous scholars. Indeed, interpretive appraisals of Stifter's work (particularly his later prose) as latent poetological and semiological *Schreibeffekte* count among some of the more influential and important studies in the field. See, for instance, Christian Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen*; Eva Geulen, *Worthörig wider Willen*; Barbara Hunfeld, *Der Blick ins All: Reflexionen des Kosmos der Zeichen bei Brockes, Jean Paul, Goethe und Stifter* (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 2004); Helena Ragg-Kirkby, *Adalbert Stifter's Late Prose: The Madness for Moderation* (New York: Camden House, 2000); and Schiffermüller, *Buchstäblichkeit und Bildlichkeit bei Adalbert Stifter.*

[70] Blumenberg, *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer: Paradigma einer Daseinsmetapher* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 17.

figure in whom Blumenberg's categories of "Innen" and "Außen" will continue to collide throughout the rest of the story.

This motif also plays a decisive role in another novella from the *Bunte Steine* cycle. In *Katzensilber*, a similar scene of flood and rescue (in this case by the mysterious *braunes Mädchen*) centers upon a transformed body of water and its eradication of visual boundaries. The children and their grandmother, like the *Landvermesser*, find themselves on the shore of what used to be a gentle brook that has now overflowed its banks following a fierce hailstorm and become a turgid current:

> Die Großmutter ging zu dem kleinen steinernen Brüklein, allein dasselbe war nicht zu sehen, und man konnte die Stelle nicht erkennen, an welcher es sei. […] Da die Großmutter zauderte, und sich bemühte, den Plaz des Brükleins aufzufinden, zeigte das braune Mädchen auf eine Stelle, und als man noch immer zögerte, ging es ruhig und entschlossen gegen das Wasser. Es ging in dasselbe hinein, ging durch dasselbe hindurch, und ging wieder zurük, gleichsam, um den Sichtbaren Beweis zu geben, daß man hindurch gelangen könne.[71]

Like the pastor from Kar, here the *braunes Mädchen* enters the swirling currents in order to locate and indicate a safe route for the children, who otherwise might choose the wrong footing and be lost beneath the surface. Both of these characters mediate the gap between obscured peril and visible objects by turning their own bodies into "sichtbare Beweise" that transpose an invisible order of unknown hazards beneath the water into a visible order of knowledge and safety above the surface. Here, the pastor and the *braunes Mädchen* operate as both sacrificial and semiotic figures, risking their own safety in the currents in order to mark a safe path for the children to follow.[72]

A critical point for our analysis of *Kalkstein* is that the sacrificial resonances of the pastor's behavior are in a way rooted within the liminal space between the unseen and the seen. The image of his "schwarze Gestalt" half-submerged in the river *becomes*

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[71] Stifter, *Katzensilber*, in *HKG* Bd. 2.2, 267.

[72] The pastor has frequently been paralleled with figures such as John the Baptist, Saint Christopher, and even Christ, and the surging brook forded by the "brown girl" have likewise been interpreted as baptismal waters of purification and spiritual rebirth. See Marie-Christin Bugelnig and Melanie Viktoria Warmuth, "'Stille Gewagtheit': Stifters *Kalkstein* – eine Geschichte der Enthüllungen," *Jahrbuch des Adalbert-Stifter-Instituts des Landes Oberösterreich* 17 (2010): 40; Christine Oertel Sjögren, "Myths and Metaphors in Stifter's 'Katzensilber,'" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 86.3 (1987): 368; and Swales 208.

salvatory in the eyes of the narrator (and the reader) once the pastor contextualizes this image with his explanation about the uneven ground of the riverbed. In this way, the selflessness that is actualized within the pastor's actions in the water suggests a primary function of sacrificiality to be the negotiation of the dialectic introduced in the opening pages, namely that of a non-visible order and its observable effects (or, to speak with Kierkegaard's language, its "fruits"). The priest's physical presence in the water, with his lower half beneath the surface and his torso extending above it, mediates these two spheres as he seeks out and guards against the hazardous underwater "Gruben und Vertiefungen" (129).[73] This figural division between the known and the unknown is intrinsic to the function of sacrifice in *Kalkstein*, for we soon learn that the pastor's numerous monetary and material sacrifices, though beneficent in their effects, do not derive from a purely selfless source. Paradoxically, however, it will turn out to be the *morally* problematic motivations behind the pastor's self-giving behavior that end up making it possible for the *ethically* sound objective of this behavior to be fulfilled. As such, a deviation from one register of law (*Sittengesetz*) will ultimately allow the overarching order of the *sanftes Gesetz* to remain whole.

Old *habitus*

The key to grasping this complicated but intrinsic function of sacrifice is revealed several years after the day of the flood, when the pastor falls ill and is paid a visit by the narrator. What follows is a frame narration by the pastor of several episodes from his past that, in light of the recounted content, bears much formal similarity to a confession and at last provides context for his stringent self-abnegation in things both fleshly and financial. As

[73] Cf. Reddick, "Tiger und Tugend in Stifters 'Kalkstein,'" 242.

we soon learn, this context pertains directly to his obsession with white linen and the furtive shame he has demonstrated in connection with it.[74]

As a young man working for his father and elder brother, the pastor had taken to looking into the yard adjoining his family's garden, where the proprietor (a widow with a young daughter) would hang fresh laundry and linen to dry. The habit became engrained, and inevitably the widow's daughter came to occupy the foreground of the pastor's gaze through the window or the latticed garden gate[75] as she gathered the dried sheets:

> "Ich sah es gar so gerne an. Manchmal stand ich an dem Fenster, und sah auf den Garten hinüber, in welchem immer ohne Unterbrechung…Wäsche an den Schnüren hing, und ich hatte die weißen Dinge sehr lieb." (113)

He continued to study her, taking special note of the fact "daß ich an dem Körper…immer am Rande des Halses oder an den Ärmeln die feinste weiße Wäsche gesehen hatte" (115). He eventually built up the courage to attract her attention by leaving peaches for her to find, and the young romance at last blossomed.[76] All the while, the pastor also began to spend his humble earnings on fine white linens which, as the narrator would notice during their first meeting many years later, he clothed himself in from then on.

The events that subsequently transpire are decisive for his trajectory: paradise is lost when the girl's mother discovers the two of them together in the garden one day

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[74] The majority of commentaries after the early 1970s read this detail of the pastor's character as evidence of his fetishism and pathological repression, characteristics which these critics see as reflective of Stifter's entire aesthetic program, not to mention his own biography. See Bugelnig and Warmuth; Elsbeth Dangel-Pelloquin, "Weiße Wäsche. Zur Synthese von Reinheit und Erotik bei Keller und Stifter," in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Sabine Schneider and Barbara Hunfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), 143-156; Katharina Grätz, "Erzählte Rituale – ritualisiertes Erzählen: literarische Sinngebung bei Adalbert Stifter," in *Ordnung – Raum – Ritual: Adalbert Stifters artifizieller Realismus*, ed. Sabine Becker (Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 2007), 164-171; Claudia Nitschke, "Chaos und Form, Raum und Ethos in Stifters *Bunte Steine*," 561-564; and Isolde Schiffermüller, "Rhetorik des Schweigens. *Kalkstein*" (*Buchstäblichkeit und Bildlichkeit*), 187-217.

[75] For a rich analysis of this leitmotif in Stifter's work, see Juliane Vogel, "Stifters Gitter. Poetologische Dimensionen einer Grenzfigur," in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen* (op. cit.), 43-59.

[76] One cannot help but be reminded here of the canonical scene from Book II of Augustine's *Confessions* in which the author steals into a neighbor's orchard in order to make off with his pears, and one can well imagine the pastor confiding, in Augustine's same frank tone, how "the fruit," like the linen, "was beautiful, but was not that which my miserable soul coveted." Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 31.

("Wir schämten uns wirklich, und liefen auseinander"), and soon thereafter the pastor's father dies, leaving the business to the elder brother who struggles to keep the finances afloat before himself succumbing to a fever. It is then that the pastor, penniless and alone, joins the priesthood and is assigned to the parish of Kar, where he has lived ever since. He tells the narrator that during this time, he has been rigorously pursuing a particular goal, donating his furniture and saving every penny he earns towards it. Though he does not yet specify what this high aim is, he does make a critical confession:

> "In der langen Zeit ist mir mein Zustand zur Gewohnheit geworden, und ich liebe ihn. Nur habe ich eine Sünde gegen dieses Sparen auf dem Gewissen: ich habe nehmlich noch immer das schöne Linnen…Es ist ein sehr großer Fehler, aber ich habe versucht, ihn durch noch größeres Sparen an meinem Körper und an anderen Dingen gut zu machen. Ich bin so schwach, ihn mir nicht abgewöhnen zu können." (119)

It is only at the end of the narrative, following the pastor's death, that the narrator at last discovers that the object of these many years of self-sacrifice and austerity has been to fund the construction of a new schoolhouse that will allow the children to avoid crossing the river, thus eliminating the risk of their drowning during times of flood.

Between this later revelation and the pastor's previous admission to the secret impetus of his ascetic lifestyle, it becomes possible to discern a temporal underpinning of sacrifice in *Kalkstein*: on the one hand, the narrator eventually learns at the end that the pastor's devotion to protecting the children from the water had concrete aims foreseen to extend well beyond his physical presence during life. And yet, on the other hand, the narrator has also already been told that this devotion is not purely preventive, but also expiatory; in other words, it is both rooted in and addressed to the past as well as to the present and the future. Thus, we can begin to see that water is significant in *Kalkstein* not only because it is at the center of the narrative setting, but also because it figuralizes the ceaseless movement and coalescence that is so innate to lived time as the pastor describes it, and in turn so imbricated with the ethical and moral substance of his sacrifices.

This relates to the earlier discussion of how water symbolizes sacrificiality as a mediation of the seen and the unseen. While the pastor's physical presence in the river could be interpreted as a literal mediation of the underwater "Vertiefungen" and the visible realm above the surface, his self-sacrificing poverty and abstinence turn out to qualify more as acts of atonement rather than a kenotic "withdrawal" of his own wellbeing for the good of the other *without* an expiatory logic of exchange.[77] His offerings, in other words, do not constitute unincited works of love in Kierkegaard's sense,[78] for the constancy of his giving and self-denial that he has made into *Gewohnheit* functions in part as compensation for the continually failed *Abgewöhnung* of the white linen. By contrast, his obsession—whether with the materiality of the linen itself or with the memory of its referent—constitutes a transgression from the vantage point of his spiritual vocation.[79]

It warrants considering the deeper implications of *Gewohnheit*, which, as the pastor himself conveys, consists in a rigorism that allows isolated and potentially variable actions and impulses eventually to be restructured as habit: "'…man gewöhnt sich daran, und meint, es müsse so sein. Aber es kann auch anders sein. An alles gewöhnt sich der Mensch, und die Gewohnheit wird dann sehr leicht, sehr leicht'" (83). In considering the opposition between the pastor's moral habituation and his retainment of the linen in which he secretly clothes himself—i.e., to the ancient relationship between outer

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[77] Compare Uwe C. Steiner's proposal that the pastor's abstemiousness is more redolent of Christ's "Exkarnation" through cruxifixion than it is of his incarnation at the beginning of his earthly trajectory. Steiner, "'Gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit': Fetischismus, die unsichtbare Hand und die Wandlungen der Dinge in Goethes *Hermann und Dorothea* und Stifters *Kalkstein*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 74.4 (2000): 643.

[78] Kierkegaard's definition of sacrificial love leaves little room for negotiation with respect to underlying motivation: "The self-denial, the self-control, and the self-sacrifice that are still only transactions within temporality, within the horizon of the human, are not truly Christian […] The movement of [temporal] sacrifice accordingly becomes specious; it makes a show of forsaking the world but still remains within the world" (*Works of Love*, 131).

[79] Hans Geulen, "Stiftersche Sonderlinge: 'Kalkstein' und 'Turmalin,'" *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 17 (1973): 418-421; Dominique Iehl, "Réalité et pénurie dans l'oeuvre littéraire et picturale de Stifter: à partir de la nouvelle *Kalkstein* et des tableaux de l'époque des *Bunte Steine*," *Etudes Germaniques* 40.3 (1985): 306; Barbara Wróblewska, "'Die Mut zur Entsagung' in Adalbert Stifters 'Kalkstein' und Ferdinand von Saars 'Innocens.'" *Studia Niemcoznawcza* 45 (2010): 335-348; and Reddick 250-251.

appearance and inner will that is intrinsic to *habitus*[80]—it might also be helpful to borrow from modern philosophical distinctions between lawful regularity and transgressive repetition. For instance, Gilles Deleuze regards law to consist in "similar form and…equivalent content"; that is, in a normative consistency that is distinct from repetition, which by contrast consists in "a singularity opposed to the general…a distinctive opposed to the ordinary, an instantaneity opposed to variation and an eternity opposed to permanence."[81] An echo of the pastor's assiduous adherence to domestic habit and ritual can be heard in Deleuze's description of moral law as being rooted within a normative generality of habituation, that is, within "second nature."[82] In this context, then, the *repetition* associated with the linen—and not merely as a recurring motif, but more crucially as an object of compulsive behavior and memory—contrasts decisively with the *repetitiousness* of habit.[83] How might we understand the nature of the pastor's sacrifices vis-à-vis this opposition between moral *Gewohnheit* and transgressive repetition?

The answer may lie in the temporal structure of the pastor's sacrificial gestures that we identified earlier. On one level his sacrifices have as their object the future

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[80] As John Cassian's fifth-century *Institutes* insist, a monk's garb (or "habit") is merely an external expression of his life's inward regulation by faith and duty—that is to say, by pious habits: "After having exposed their outward appearance to view we shall then be able to discuss, in logical sequence, their inner worship." Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: Newman Press, 2000), 21.

[81] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 2-3.

[82] Hegel articulates this concept in the third part of the *Enzyklopädie* (1817), specifically in the section on subjective Spirit: "Die Gewohnheit ist mit Recht eine zweite Natur genannt worden, – *Natur*, denn sie ist ein unmittelbares Sein der Seele, – eine *zweite*, denn sie ist eine von der Seele *gesetzte* Unmittelbarkeit […]" (§410, emphases in the original). According to Hegel, the subject graduates from its natural state by codifying certain actions and experiences into habits, allowing the self to emerge into consciousness and make way for the eventual emergence of Spirit. Thus, like the topoi of sacrifice in Stifter's dialectic of hidden cause and perceivable effect, *Gewohnheit* in Hegel's system operates as a middle bridge between two poles: viz., nature, on the one hand, and Spirit, on the other. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaft im Grundriss III. Werke Bd. 10*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 183.

[83] According to Sabina Becker and Katharina Grätz, in Stifter's work ritual denotes normalizing and standardizing behaviors that codify particular subjective impulses; it is therefore a crucial mechanism in Stifter's overall literary project because it allows for the establishment of order, regularity, and meaning within the external, unpredictable world. See Sabine Becker and Katharina Grätz, "Einleitung," in *Ordnung – Raum – Ritual* (op. cit.), 8. Cf. Michèle Godau, *Wirkliche Wirklichkeit: Mythos und Ritual bei Adalbert Stifter und Hans Henny Jahnn* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005); and Bolterauer 130-142, 394-406.

wellbeing of the children, yet on another level these future-oriented sacrifices ultimately emerge as retrospective attempts to redress a past transgression—one which is kept alive within the pastor's attachment to this past's material manifestation (i.e., the linen). The dual-movement of the pastor's acts of devotion that outwardly project into the future even as they secretly attend to the past offers a felicitous illustration of "repetition" in Kierkegaard's own terms: *gjentagelsen*.[84] Like the German *Wiederholung*, the Danish word does not denote iteration of a specific event via anamnesis or recollection, but instead literally means a "taking anew" of the past *into* the present instant such that this instant swells with potentiality and change. As a result, the temporal emphasis of repetition for Kierkegaard paradoxically falls not so much to the past, but rather to the futurity that is inherent to any action undertaken with an eye to reconstituting the past. Returning to *Kalkstein*, then, we can see how the pastor's future-oriented sacrifices are simultaneously "re-takings" of the past in an attempt to dissolve its tenacious grip upon the present.

Opus operatum

With this in mind, there is a final question to ask: how do both of these temporal underpinnings of sacrifice in *Kalkstein*—i.e., the devotion to the future wellbeing of the other that is at the same time an expiatory "taking again" of one's own past—relate to Stifter's categories of law? Though in one sense the *Naturgesetz* occupies the foreground of the novella insofar as the violent storm and the resultant flood most immediately determine the key moments of the plot, the *Sittengesetz* is the true focal point of its embedded narrative about the pastor's actions and their unspoken, unseen roots. Let us therefore examine the ethical implications of the pastor's sacrifices vis-à-vis Stifter's theoretical system of an underlying, universal *sanftes Gesetz*.

[84] Cf. Beckmann, "Stifters 'sanftes Gesetz': Selbstwiederholung in der Wirklichkeit," 443-452.

On the one hand, the pastor's commitment to the children's safety clearly fulfills a key principle of the *Sittengesetz* by standing in direct opposition to *Einseitigkeit* or *Selbstsüchtigkeit*. His physical act of protecting them from unseen "Gräben Gruben und Vertiefungen" beneath the surface of the water can be viewed as a representative image of his self-sacrificial *habitus*, including his financial and physical self-denial for the sake of funding a new schoolhouse whose location would keep the children out of harm's way. However, he will eventually confess that these acts are at least partially undertaken as a means of atoning for his inability to give up the white linen he has hoarded all these years. It must be emphasized that this linen, like the Augustinian motif of fruit, does not correspond *qua* object to concrete sinful acts (i.e., youthful lust and the subsequent, idolatrous commemoration of this lust), but instead stands for the very condition of sin. In other words, it is not as an object of sin but as an objective correlative[85] of sinfulness per se that the linen warrants atonement. As we have observed, in Stifter's poetics of the *Sitten-* and *Naturgesetz*, condition and cause possess a higher degree of significance than singularity and effect. Insofar as this poetics can be said to inform the character of the pastor, the condition of sinfulness therefore demands atonement more than any singular sinful deeds that have been committed as an effect of this condition.

Thus, like the vision of the pastor wading through the currents of the flooded river, his sacrificial gestures also pertain to Kierkegaard's dialectic of observable "fruits" of kenotic devotion and the unseen ground out of which they grow. Should we regard these sacrifices for the benefit of the other as any less proper to the *Sittengesetz* simply because the motivation for them is at least partly rooted in a torsion of conscience? Or,

[85] In my view, the linen and the memories associated with it neatly illustrate T. S. Eliot's concept of "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events" that become a "formula" of a "*particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." However, an important point of contrast is that in *Kalkstein* the linen does not correlate simply to emotion, but rather to the recognition of an entire state of being that generates the emotions in question. Eliot, "Hamlet and his Problems," in *The Sacred Wood. Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1960), 100.

to ask in a reformulation of Kierkegaard's metaphor, would the *Sittengesetz* of reciprocal love correspond more to the invisible *roots* of a tree of sacrifice, or to its visible and knowable *fruits* (i.e., in sacrificial works and acts)?[86]

If the narrative itself can be said to offer any answer, it is that in addition to being ingrained in the border between unseen conditions and seen effects, sacrifice also rests upon a temporal movement whereby the futurity of intention and the retrospection of conscience nimbly fall together within a single instant of ethical decision that transpires as *Gewohnheit*. According to the foreword to *Bunte Steine*, the ethical substance of human actions, sacrificial or otherwise, is determined by the degree to which the ramifications of these actions contribute to universality as opposed to singularity:

> …so sind es hauptsächlich doch immer die gewöhnlichen alltäglichen in Unzahl immer wiederkehrenden Handlungen der Menschen, in denen dieses [Sittengesez] am sichersten als Schwerpunkt liegt, weil diese Handlungen die dauernden die gründenden sind, gleichsam die Millionen Wurzelfasern des Baumes des Lebens…[87]

Paradoxically, it is precisely because the pastor's acts fail to qualify as truly *kenotic* self-sacrifice due to their hidden impetus—i.e., because they "re-take" an individual past in order to expiate its transgressions by means of the children's future good—that the cyclicity, constancy, and collectivity of the *Sittengesetz* is finally achieved. In other words, although the pastor's sacrificial impulse derives in part from an "unsittliche" source, this very source conditions the specific temporal character of his actual sacrifices, and this temporal character ultimately comes forth as the guarantor of the *Sittengesetz* on a structural level: it is because of the pastor's *acts*, and not the concealed motivations behind them, that the children will continue to be kept safe even after he is no longer there. Exceptions of law become part *of* law, like an invisible "Lücke" that from a certain angle suddenly becomes visible, if only as shadow.

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[86] A striking echo of this occurs in a line from one of Stifter's earlier stories, *Der Hagestolz* (1844/45), in which the protagonist's uncle declares: "Ich sage dir sogar, daß die Hingabe seiner selbst für andere – selber in den Tod – …gerade nichts anders ist, als das stärkste Aufplazen der Blume des eigenen Lebens." Stifter, *Der Hagestolz. Buchfassung*, in *HKG* Bd. 1.6, 122.
[87] *HKG* Bd. 2.2, 14.

To a certain degree, this reading evokes Freud's hypothesis, advanced first in *Totem und Tabu* (1913) and then in a revised form in *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* (1939), that sacrifice emerges within human culture as a response to a collective, unconscious sense of guilt over a foundational act of violence. More particularly, Freud suggests that cultural systems of morality, ethics, and law are the results of this primordial guilt having insinuated itself first into religious rituals of sacrifice, and from thence into societal mores of restraint (and even repression). However, while the pastor's moral obsessiveness has a certain neurotic structure insofar as it is compulsive and responds to a past event, the process by which his guilt is transposed into a spiritual, moral, *and* ethical praxis is conscious and individual, rather than unconscious and collective. He knows guilt to be the source of his actions, and he also knows the source of this guilt.

In some sense, then, the pastor's sacrificiality manifests a superegoic aspect of morality rather than an unconscious one. This also might have to do with how sacrifice's function within the life of the pastor reflects its function within Stifter's schema of law as well: because it is not an *unconscious* propitiatory response to a violent act, sacrifice here comprises a denial of the self rather than the violent expurgation of a substitutive object (e.g., the linen). Self-sacrifice is the manifestation of a particular kind of guilt, in other words, making apparent what was initially invisible to the narrator just like the pastor's body signals the underwater hazards of the riverbed to our view above the surface.

In the final passages of the story we learn that the empirical objective of a new schoolhouse is finally attained after the community, moved by the revelation of the pastor's ceaseless pursuit of their children's safety,[88] collectively donates the necessary outstanding funds. In *Kalkstein*, acts of sacrifice put the *Sittengesetz* into effect even if the

[88] The tearful remark made by the pastor's landlord following this realization is significant: "O wie habe ich den Mann verkannt, ich hielt ihn beinahe für geizig…" (130).

motivation behind these acts is not wholly pure, in a mode quite similar to the medieval theological distinction between a rite whose validity rests upon the moral purity of the officiant (*ex opere operantis*) and one whose sacramental value is tied solely to the fact and event of the rite's performance (*ex opere operato*).[89] Thus the pastor's works of love, as an *opus operatum* rather than an *opus operantis*, manages to uphold the Gentle Law by virtue of its effects, even if the hidden cause of the work diverges from some of this law's tenets.

Moreover, just as the *Vorrede* suggested that it was possible for the *Sittengesetz* and *Naturgesetz* to be unsynchronized, the pastor's story shows that an internal, Hegelian duality[90] of *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität* is possible within a single category of law; the *sanftes Gesetz* can be *ethically* in effect (i.e., it can have "zweckmäßige" consequences according to the *Sittengesetz*) by way of sacrificial acts even if the *moral* grounding of these acts is not entirely "zwecklos" (i.e., kenotic). This particular text thus allows a space in which Stifter's poetics can unfold fully, for in the arc of the pastor's life—along with the variety of actions that give it its shape—we can find both an imprint and an itinerary of the laws that are said to give the world its shape in turn.

Thus, the pastor's sacrificiality inverts the two key terms of the *sanftes Gesetz*: effects are now "höher" than their causes. Yet even in spite of this inversion, by all appearances the *sanftes Gesetz* is very much in effect at the end of the novella. In the same way that sacrifice had illuminated the jointure of law's interrupted effects and its uninterrupted cause in *Die Sonnenfinsterniß*, in *Kalkstein* it carries out an internal movement

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[89] *The Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. 13, s.v. "Sacraments." Given the centrality of water symbolism for our reading, it is interesting to note that this distinction was first drawn in third and fourth-century debates about the sacrament of baptism, specifically. See Agamben, *Opus Dei: An Archaeology of Duty*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 20-26.

[90] "Der Geist ist das *sittliche Leben* eines *Volks* [...] Er muß zum Bewußtsein über das, was er unmittelbar ist, fortgehen, das schöne sittliche Leben aufheben und…zum Wissen seiner selbst gelangen. […] Der in sich selbst nunmehr entzweite Geist beschreibt…die eine seiner Welten, das *Reich der Bildung*, und…das *Reich des Wesens* […] [D]as in das *Diesseits* und *Jenseits* verteilte…Reich kehrt in das Selbstbewußtsein zurück, das nun in der *Moralität* sich als die Wesenheit und das Wesen als wirkliches Selbst erfaßt. […] Die sittliche Welt, die in das Diesseits und Jenseits zerrissene Welt und die moralische Weltanschauung sind also die Geister, deren Bewegung und Rückgang in das einfache fürsichseiende Selbst des Geistes sich entwickeln." Hegel, "VI: Der Geist," in *Phänomenologie des Geistes. Werke* Bd. 3, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michels (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), 326-327 (emphases in the original).

by which law—in the form of the *sanftes Gesetz*—can be simultaneously in suspension and in effect. This movement is not miraculous, as in *Die Sonnenfinsterniß*, but has been incorporated into the very concept of law itself; and it has also brought us from the light to the water, where subsequent German Realist narratives will tend to remain, as we shall see over the course of this project.

Conclusion – "…als sei uns ein Ozean von Licht geschenkt worden"[91]

If one were to take Benjamin's cue and search Stifter's work for traces of a "demonic shadow" in its visually determined poetics, one would find the motif of disrupted vision to exemplify both a figurative and, in certain texts, literal *Verfinsterung* of cosmic law.[92] The forms of non-visibility that herald nature's disturbances of its own regularity are tied in varyingly explicit ways to characters' impressions of fate's operation within nature. In many of Stifter's most iconic tales, moments of uncanny privation—or, alternatively, excess—of light register as suspensions in the natural order. Whether in the eclipse of *Die Sonnenfinsterniß*, the inexplicable circumstances and ramifications of lightning in *Abdias*, or the sublimely frightening suffusions of snow and luminescence within a "weiße Finsternis" in *Bergkristall* and *Aus dem bairischen Walde*, light blinds through its presence as well as its absence.

In the *Blumenkette* preface and in novellas such as *Kalkstein* and *Katzensilber*, by comparison, water and the threat of drowning it poses to children constitute a "Lücke" or, to borrow Benjmain's term, a "Schatten- und Nachtseite" of the Gentle Law. The topos of the river is no stranger to philosophical discourse on lawfulness, for with its simultaneously constant and protean quality, it has often served as a preferred metaphor for cosmic *physis* and human *nomos* throughout Western thought. Deleuze, for instance, evokes these Heraclitian tropes in order to illustrate law's dual components of normative

[91] Stifter, *Die Sonnenfinsterniß am 8. Juli 1842*, 14.
[92] "…da ergibt es sich, daß bei Stifter sich gleichsam eine Rebellion und Verfinsterung der Natur ereignet welche ins höchste Grauenvolle, Dämonische umschlägt […]" Benjamin, *Stifter*, 608.

generality, on the one hand, and a mutability that allows this generality to perdure, on the other: "Law unites the change of the water and the permanence of the river," he writes.[93]

In *Kalkstein*, the river that has overrun its banks and threatens the children's safety seems at first glance to diverge from this model, presenting instead the aftermath of injured *sanftes Gesetz*. This apparent disruption of the Gentle Law in nature is countered by the narrator's perception of it as a scene of selfless devotion. However, the pastor's physical mediation of the seen and unseen spheres of the water literalizes the contingency of third-person observation, for the narrator and reader later learn that both the witnessed instant in which the pastor delivers the children from danger as well as his ongoing dedication to their future safety have an additional, hidden impetus. In other words, the acts and gestures that are seen by a Blumenbergian *Zuschauer* from the "shore" as unprovoked works of love and self-sacrifice in actuality correspond with the clandestine atonement for guilt and truths hidden "beneath the surface." To a similar degree, the pastor's asceticism eventually slides into focus at the end of the tale, weaving the earlier image of him in the river into a contextual fabric of sacrifice for the sake of salvation from water.

Water, as a symbol and setting of the pastor's sacrificiality, is thus the focal point of law's operation in the story. Both *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* and *Kalkstein* invoke sacrifice in connection with scenes of disrupted law, staged alongside abnormal manifestations of light and water. *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* directly associates Christ's crucifixion with the liminal instant between the disappearance and reemergence of the sunlight, while in *Kalkstein* the pastor's presence in the river marks a simultaneous deviation from the *Sittengesetz* and a fulfillment of it. The theme of drowning adds to the symbolic resonances of water, for if water and light can embody the mysterious—and at times even miraculous—effects of law's operation in nature, then drowning embodies the potential for this hidden order to

[93] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 2.

become unexpectedly visible. However, rather than evincing a miraculous suspension of law by the divine, as the eclipse had, drowning would constitute an unveiling of a graver sort; not to the "leibliche Augen" of simple perception, nor to the "geistige Augen" of reason, but instead to the "Augen des Herzens."[94] The drowning of a child would comprise an *Augenblick* in which any order of law—hidden or not—becomes suddenly, terribly beside the point from the vantage of the human heart.

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As we exit the realm of Stifter's early short prose and turn to subsequent texts of German Realism, we will encounter different paradigms of law, sacrifice and ethics. By the time of Stifter's death, the more optimistic, selfless modes of sacrifice introduced by *Die Sonnenfinsterniß* and developed in *Kalkstein* have given way to post-Biedermeier anxieties and pessimisms linked to water rather than to light, as the works of Keller, Storm and Fontane—and specifically the drowning scenes that form core of their plots—will demonstrate. Stifter's work anticipates these themes in notable ways, showing how the solace that one might derive from the consistency of sunlight's disappearance and return is countered by water's preclusion of figural and temporal predictability. Whether in his fictional settings such as Kar, where the pastor attempts to redress his past and to protect the children from the river, or in the factual instance of Stifter's own foster-daughter committing suicide by drowning in the spring of 1859,[95] what water reveals—or, perhaps better, reflects—in his work and life is a Benjaminian "Schatten-

[94] Stifter distinguishes between "leibliche" and "geistige" eyes in the *Vorrede*, and in *Abdias* the narrator had also drawn a distinction between "das Auge der Seele" (in the preface) as well as "leibliche Augen," and "Augen des Herzens" (in the story itself). The respective passages read as follows: "Wenn wir, so wie wir für das Licht die Augen haben, auch für die Electricität…ein Sinneswerkzeug hätten, welche große Welt welche Fülle von unermeßlichen Erscheinungen würde uns da aufgethan sein. Wenn wir aber auch dieses *leibliche Auge* nicht haben, so haben wir dafür *das geistige der Wissenschaft*" (*Vorrede*, *HKG* Bd. 2.2, p. 11); "Deborah…hatte nur *leibliche Augen* empfangen um die Schönheit des Körpers zu sehen, nicht *geistige*, die *des Herzens*" (*Abdias*, *HKG* Bd. 1.5, p. 250).

[95] The body of Juliane Mohaupt was discovered in the Danube on the eighteenth of April. See Wolfgang Matz, *Adalbert Stifter oder "Diese fürchterliche Wendung der Dinge"* (München: Hanser, 1995), 304.

und Nachtseite" of Heraclitus' most famous axiom, in which the sole certainty one can cling to is that of uncertainty.

Nowhere does Stifter's writing intimate this more hauntingly than in the autobiographical fragment *Mein Leben*, which he worked on slowly from 1866 until October 1868, three months before he took his own life.[96] At one point in the text, as he strains to reach back to the first glimmer of his own conscious memory as a young child, he offers this impression: "Dann schwamm ich in etwas Fächelndem, ich schwamm hin und wider, es wurde immer weicher und weicher in mir, dann wurde ich wie trunken, dann war nichts mehr."[97]

[96] Stifter died on 28 January 1868. The most widely accepted theory is that he attempted to slit his own throat with a razor sometime after midnight and eventually succumbed to his wounds around eight o'clock that morning. See Hermann Augustin, *Adalbert Stifters Krankheit und Tod: Eine biographische Quellenstudie* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1964), 116-126; Peter A. Schoenborn, *Adalbert Stifter: sein Leben und Werk* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1992), 550-558; and Arnold Stadler, *Mein Stifter: Portrait eines Selbstmörders in spe und fünf Photographien* (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 2005), 54-62. Cf. *Stifter-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Christian Begemann and Davide Giuriato (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017), 180.

[97] Stifter, "Mein Leben [Nachlaßblätter]," in *Gesammelte Werke in vierzehn Bänden* Bd. 14, ed. Konrad Steffen (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1972), 117.

Chapter 2

Flumen publicum: Imitation, Recognition, and Rite in Gottfried Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*

> *Who will lay hold on the human heart to make it still,*
> *so that it can see how eternity, in which there is neither*
> *future nor past, stands still […]?*
> —Augustine[1]

> *Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys,*
> *Seeing at end of street the barren mountains,*
> *Round corners coming suddenly on water,*
> *Knowing them shipwrecked who were launched for islands,*
> *We honour founders of these starving cities*
> *Whose honour is the image of our sorrow […]*
> —W. H. Auden[2]

Gottfried Keller had only been engaged to Christina Luise Scheidegger for a number of weeks when, on the morning 13 July 1866 (a Friday), her body was found in the shallow pond of her garden in Herzogenbuchsee.[3] Keller, who would remain unmarried for the rest of his life, left behind almost no records of the effect that his fiancée's suicide had on him; as a consequence, we cannot know if he ever reflected upon how eerily this tragic event echoed the conclusion of a novella he had written ten years earlier.[4] In the final scene of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (1856), the two protagonists, having been barred from a sanctioned marriage in their community, conduct a private wedding ceremony on the banks of a river. Then, shortly after recognizing each other as husband and wife, they drown themselves.

Whether or not this macabre imitation of art by life ever occupied Keller's thoughts, one can certainly regard the underlying motivation of scholarship on *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* as an attempt to identify the ultimate cause of the story's tragic climax

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[1] *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 229 [11.xi.13].
[2] Ln. 1-6, "Paysage Moralisé" (1934).
[3] Emil Ermatinger, *Gottfried Kellers Leben, Briefe und Tagebücher* Bd. 1 (Stuttgart/Berlin: J. G. Cotta, 1924), 425; Walter Baumann, *Gottfried Keller: Leben, Werk, Zeit* (Zürich/München: Artemis, 1986), 139-146; Hans Wysling, ed., *Gottfried Keller 1819-1890* (Zürich/München: Artemis, 1990), 240-245.
[4] Walter Baumann and Hans Wysling both speculate that Keller destroyed all such materials himself, possibly with the subsequent assistance of his literary executor (Baumann, ibid., 139; Wysling, ibid., 240).

and dénouement. The answers have been myriad, ranging from the necessary effects of capital,[5] to bourgeois mores and normative ideals,[6] to the interior frameworks of subjectivity itself.[7] All of these approaches, whatever their nuances and differences, ultimately assume an overarching causality of transgression and consequence in the plot.[8] The reasons for this are understandable enough. Keller's tale follows the short lives of Sali and Vrenchen, whose fathers set in motion a series of events and actions that condemn their children to shame in the eyes of the community. It is this social stigma that ultimately impedes Sali and Vrenchen's ideal existence in the village as a respectable married couple, and in the end they sacrifice their lives in exchange for a brief taste of this ideal, though only by way of simulating it.

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[5] Georg Lukács, "Gottfried Keller," in *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1951), 147-230; Hans-Joachim Hahn, "Die 'Tücke des Objekts' – ein Strukturmerkmal in den Seldwyler Novellen?" in *Gottfried Keller: Die Leute von Seldwyla. Kritische Studien*, ed. Hans-Joachim Hahn and Uwe Seja (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 47-70; Hans Richter, "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe," in *Gottfried Kellers frühe Novellen* (Berlin: Rütten und Loening, 1966), 111-141; Heinrich Richartz, *Literaturkritik als Gesellschaftskritik: Darstellungsweise und politisch-didaktische Intention in Gottfried Kellers Erzählkunst* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1975), 87-122; and Gert Sautermeister, "Gottfried Keller – Kritik und Apologie des Privateigentums. Möglichkeiten und Schranken liberaler Intelligenz," in *Positionen der literarischer Intelligenz zwischen bürgerlicher Reaktion und Imperialismus,* ed. Gert Mattenklott and Klaus Scherpe (Kronberg: Scriptor Taschenbücher, 1973), 39-102.

[6] Thomas Koebner, "Gottfried Keller, 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe': die Recherche nach den Ursachen eines Liebestods," in *Erzählungen und Novellen des 19. Jahrhunderts* Vol 2 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), 203-234; Michael Schmitz, "Um Liebe, Leben und Tod: zur Struktur und Problemreferenz in Gottfried Kellers *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*," *Wirkendes Wort* 52 (2002): 67-80; Rolf Selbmann, *Gottfried Keller: Romane und Erzählungen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2001); and Martin Swales, "Gottfried Kellers *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,*" in *Zu Gottfried Keller*, ed. Hartmut Steinecke (Stuttgart: Klett, 1984), 54-67.

[7] The psychological, behavioral and emotional categories of such experience are addressed by Alan Corkhill, "Fortune Maketh the Man? Notions of *Glück* in the *Seldwyla* Novellas," in *Gottfried Keller: Die Leute von Seldwyla. Kritische Studien* (op. cit.), 25-46; Gerhard Kaiser, *Gottfried Keller: Das gedichtete Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1981), 296-314; Yomb May, "*Die Leute von Seldwyla* als Paradigma des bürgerlichen Realismus," in *Gottfried Keller: Die Leute von Seldwyla. Kritische Studien* (op. cit.), 71-92; E. A. McCormick, "The Idylls in Keller's *Romeo and Julia*: A Study in Ambivalence," *The German Quarterly* 35 (1962): 265-279; and T. M. Holmes, "*Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*: the Idyll of Possessive Individualism," in *Gottfried Keller 1819-1890: London Symposium 1990* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1991), 67-80. The philosophical articulations of this—particularly the atheist Humanism traced in Keller's appropriation of Feuerbach's thought—are considered by Mary E. Gilbert, "Zur Bildlichkeit in Kellers *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,*" *Wirkendes Wort* 4 (1953-54): 354-358; Hanspeter Gsell, *Einsamkeit, Idyll und Utopie: Studien zum Problem der Einsamkeit und Bindung in Kellers Romanen und Novellen* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976); Edith A. Runge, "Ein kleiner Blick in die künstlerische Verwandlung: zu Kellers 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,'" *Monatshefte* 52 (1960): 249-252; and Hans Joachim Schrimpf, "Das Poetische sucht das Reale: Probleme des literarischen Realismus im 19. Jahrhundert. Gottfried Keller zum Beispiel," in *Wege der Literaturwissenschaft,* ed. Jutta Kolkenbrock-Netz et al. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1985), 144-162.

[8] Walter Benjamin's own comments on the novella established these as key points of interpretive interest. See Benjamin, "Gottfried Keller: zu Ehren einer kritischen Ausgabe seiner Werke," in *Gesammelte Schriften.* Vol. 2.1 *Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 283-295.

This chapter examines how both the stage and choreography of Keller's text consist of a single, key pattern: throughout the novella, particular sorts of infraction against particular forms of law result in the necessity for particular modes of sacrifice.[9] In the first part of the novella, the young protagonists ritualistically bury a doll that they have mutilated and adorned together. This motif then repeats itself in their fathers' surreptitious seizure of land they privately believe already to be owned, only to obscure this secret deed by publicly bidding for legal ownership over a small triangular corner of the soil that they have not yet managed to steal. The sacrificial mode of burial introduced by the children's game thus reflects an impulse that the adults also share vis-à-vis the law: namely, to hide something taboo from view.

In the second half of the story, by contrast, the protagonists pretend to be a married couple out of the desire precisely *for* recognition within the gaze of their community. Their imitation of a particular legal status is driven by the wish to be misrecognized—i.e., to be seen not as who and what they are, but as something they want to be—and it is this imitation of lawfulness per se that ultimately constitutes their transgression against it. Appropriately, their second sacrificial rite takes place in water rather than earth, because it aims not so much to transform and conceal, but to renew and reveal.

While the burial is "sacrificial" in the elemental sense of transporting an object from the quotidian sphere by destroying it in a ritualistic mode, the drowning is sacrificial

[9] Derek Hillard and Winfried Menninghaus have thus far provided the most perceptive accounts of sacrificiality in the novella, and while my own analysis takes cues from several of their observations, it will ultimately offer a different reading. For Menninghaus, the protagonists' suicide functions as an attempt to redress infractions against lawful order by mythic means of violent self-sacrifice. Hillard is similarly interested in the issue of myth's preservation within the material and social order as a result of sacrifice, though he does not focus upon the climactic suicide as the primary source of this. He instead analyzes the earlier scene where Sali and Vrenchen sacrificially mutilate and bury a doll as support for his thesis that the main function of sacrifice in the tale is to instantiate a secret, "cryptic" space where pre-social forms of myth—embodied in play—can survive within (or beneath) bourgeois society. Hillard, "Violence, Ritual and Community: On Sacrifice in Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* and Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Monatshefte* 101.3 (2009): 361-381; Menninghaus, "*Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*: eine Interpretation im Anschluß an Walter Benjamin," in *Artistische Schrift: Studien zur Kompositionskunst Gottfried Kellers* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 91-159.

in a very different sense. Rather than ceremonially immolating an object or a creature, Sali and Vrenchen's last rite offers up their own lives in order to hold fast to a desired model of life. More particularly, the possibility of a real life—though one that does not accord with their ideal—is sacrificed in exchange for the momentary simulation of this ideal. But in order for the fantasy to be experienced as such, it must be fleeting and singular so that it will not to blur into subsequent consciousness that would retroactively dismantle both the moment of fantasy and their brief absorption within it. We can conceptualize this in terms of an Aristotelian distinction that Giorgio Agamben has written about elsewhere: in the drowning scene, the protagonists offer their lives (*zoē*) to the water in exchange for being able to fully "live out"—to experience as both real and true—their fantasy of a particular *form of life* (*bios*).[10]

Such themes of community, reciprocation, mimesis, and sacrifice immediately bring to mind the theory of René Girard, and aspects of his work will indeed prove useful for reading Keller's novella. A good point of entry in this regard is Girard's basic premise that sacrifice (as a solution to widespread, mimetic vengeance in ancient society) precedes modern judiciary systems (as limited, formalized exercises of vengeance), though both share the same essential function: namely, to prevent communal violence.[11] By contrast, *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* offers a portrait of sacrifice's autonomous subsistence within the bounds of nineteenth-century Swiss bourgeois society—i.e., within a quintessential embodiment of lawfulness. By the end of the novella, we will have seen a paradigm of sacrifice emerge that can be found in all of the works under examination in this dissertation, and that challenges many conceptualizations of sacrifice familiar to us from twentieth-century theorists: in German Realism, sacrifice is not

[10] Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1-2.
[11] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 18-22, 297-299.

something that simply prefigures, symbolizes, or subverts law, but is rather a vessel of human desires that have lawfulness itself as their very object.

I.

The Empty Field

Much like the stories of Stifter, the setting in which Keller's tale begins is a serene landscape of gentle order and proportion.[12] The breadth of the land that the narrative eye gradually descends upon extends between the river and the horizon, immediately suggesting water and soil to be spatial and thematic poles of the narrative that is to follow.[13] Indeed, little seems to be hidden from view as the description homes in on three parallel fields, the middle one of which "schien seit langen Jahren brach und wüst zu liegen, denn er war mit Steinen und hohem Unkraut bedeckt und eine Welt von geflügelten Tierchen summte ungestört über ihm" (74). The wildness of this middle space belies the cultivated symmetry of the outer two fields, which are being languidly plowed by two farmers who seem to be both visual and rhythmic mirrors of one another:[14]

> So pflügten beide ruhevoll und es war schön anzusehen in der stillen goldenen Septembergegend, wenn sie so auf der Höhe aneinander vorbeizogen, still und langsam, und sich mählich voneinander entfernten, immer weiter auseinander, bis beide wie zwei untergehende Gestirne hinter die Wölbung des Hügels hinabgingen und verschwanden, um eine gute Weile darauf wieder zu erscheinen. (75-76)

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[12] All citations and quotations from the text refer to the following edition: Keller, *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe,* Bd. 4, ed. Walter Morgenthaler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 1996), 74-159.
[13] As was the case in the previous chapter, a salient topos of the novella is the association of visibility with lawfulness and regularity. Benjamin posits that Keller's work features a "*Sinnenlust*" of description rather than one of gazing, because within description the seen object "returns the gaze," and thus captures the *Lust* related to two gazes seeking each other out. Arlette Camion takes the opposite view, arguing that Keller's "*Sinnenlust*" pertains instead to the described act of seeing rather than to describing the seen object. Benjamin, "Gottfried Keller," 290; and Arlette Camion, "Kellers 'Augenlust': zu 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,'" in *Eros und Literatur: Liebe in Texten von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace*, ed. Christiane Solte-Gresser (Bremen: Edition Lumière, 2005), 181.
[14] Cf. Alexander Honold, "Vermittlung und Verwilderung: Gottfried Kellers 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,'" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 78.3 (2004): 463; and Hans Dietrich Irmscher, "Konfiguration und Spiegelung in Gottfried Kellers Erzählungen," *Euphorion* 65 (1971): 319-333.

What this introductory sequence establishes before all else is a relationship between the tranquility of agrarian order and a visual access to that order as it operates. This association is at its clearest when the farmers' gradual and symmetrical progress through the parallel fields is compared with the cosmic movement of celestial bodies ("wie zwei untergehende Gestirne"), whose regular disappearance and reappearance bespeak proper equilibrium. (Keller's use of this particular metaphor to describe the synchronized course of the plows is lyrical in multiple senses; after all, as Seamus Heaney notes, a *versus*, from which "verse" derives, was the Latin word both for a poetic line as well as for "the turn that a ploughman made at the head of the field as he finished one furrow and faced back into another").[15]

The two fathers pause their work with the arrival their young children (a boy, Sali, and a girl, Vrenchen), leaving their plows in the half-finished furrows and greeting each other as they settle down to their midday meal. They begin to discuss the legal status of the abandoned field lying between their respective properties, and it is only at this point that we learn their names: Manz (the father of Sali) and Marti (the father of Vrenchen). Manz remarks: "Schad ist es aber doch, daß der gute Boden so daliegen muß, es ist nicht zum Ansehen, das geht nun schon in die zwanzig Jahre so und keine Seele fragt darnach…" (78). This brings both of them to reflect on the fact that none of their neighbors possess a legal claim to the land, and that the whereabouts of the rightful inheritors—"die Kinder des verdorbenen Trompeters"—are unknown. Marti continues this line of thought:

> "Wenn ich den schwarzen Geiger ansehe, der sich bald bei den Heimatlosen aufhält, bald in den Dörfern zum Tanz aufspielt, so möchte ich darauf schwören, daß er ein Enkel des Trompeters ist, der freilich nicht weiß, daß er noch einen Acker hat." (ibid.)

Here, Marti hints at the legal potential of physiognomy, for the black fiddler—a spectral outsider of the community—visually resembles the last known owner of the land. This

[15] Heaney, "The Makings of a Music: Reflections on Wordsworth and Yeats," in *Preoccupations. Selected Prose 1968-1978* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980), 65.

implicit suggestion of unwritten *Recht* immediately provokes Manz to counter with a reference to the bureaucracy of written documentation:

> "Da könnte man eine schöne Geschichte anrichten!" antwortete Manz, "wir haben so genug zu tun, diesem Geiger das Heimatsrecht in unserer Gemeinde abzustreiten […] Wie in aller Welt können wir wissen, daß er des Trompeters Sohnessohn ist? Was mich betrifft, wenn ich den Alten auch in dem dunklen Gesicht vollkommen zu erkennen glaube, so sage ich: irren ist menschlich, und das geringste Fetzchen Papier, ein Stücklein von einem Taufschein würde meinem Gewissen besser tun als zehn sündhafte Menschengesichter!" (ibid.)

Manz insistently casts doubt on the validity of the black fiddler's appearance with respect to his possible claim to the field, aligning this visual mode of identification first and foremost with the human tendency for misrecognition.[16] Faces, as well as the eyes that regard them, are more prone to error than to accuracy, he suggests. Alternatively, a physical document such as a baptism or birth certificate would dispel all ambiguity regarding the fiddler's lineage, and thus secure (or, alternatively, controvert) his hereditary claim to the land.

However, because such documentation does not exist, ownership cannot be legally proven or disproven. As a result, the appearance of a human body, which in itself is not a correlate of the law in any strict sense, becomes capable in this instance of replacing law's usual objective manifestation (i.e., text).[17] While it may not be possible to prove or disprove the fiddler's *legal* claim to the field because he does not possess the necessary documents to do so, his physical features nonetheless insinuate the possibility of his *rightful* claim to it by virtue of a filial relationship. The roots of this visual and

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[16] Cf. Christian Begemann, "Ein weiter Mantel, doktrinäre Physiognomisten und eine grundlose Schönheit: Körpersemiotik und Realismus bei Gottfried Keller," in *Methodisch reflektiertes Interpretieren*, ed. Hans P. Ecker et al. (Passau: Wissenschaftsverlag Rothe, 1997), 333-354. Curiously, *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* is not among the texts from the *Seldwyla* cycle that Begemann discusses in his analysis.

[17] According to Cornelia Vismann, the relation between visuality and textuality is integral to the origins of law. While the spoken and the written word attract the focus of many legal histories (e.g., the provenance of Roman *lex* as a textual documentation and transmission of the *ius* that originally was proclaimed vocally), Vismann underscores the role of spectatorship—and theatricality in particular—in the development of juristic forms. As Aeschylus' *Eumenides* demonstrates, the filiation between law and tragedy centers every bit as much upon what is *seen* as upon what is heard and read. Vismann, *Medien der Rechtsprechung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), esp. 29-37, 72-96. On the relationship between *lex* and *ius* noted above, see Peter Stein, *Roman Law in European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

corporeal state of exception spring from the space between *Gesetz* and *Recht*, and it is within this space that Manz and Marti will eventually carry out their gradual infraction of land theft.

Before moving forward, it is worth identifying two legal concepts—one ancient and one specific to nineteenth-century Switzerland—which this brief scene invokes. First, the question of possession that the empty field brings into the foreground is also one which Roman jurists devoted thought to. The precept of *nullius res occupanti cedit* held that when a potentially claimable object or terrain is unowned or unoccupied—that is, when it is literally "nobody's thing" (*res nullius*)—it properly belongs to whomever seizes it first.[18] This directly concerns the question of whether the black fiddler is in fact an extant claimant to the land given his possible relation to the only established owner; in other words, the question of whether or not the field is a true *res nullius*.[19]

These ancient Roman parameters for land acquisition lead us to a second legal issue broached by the scene that is contemporaneous with Keller himself. Manz refers to an ongoing process in the village of contesting the fiddler's *Heimatrecht*, which if successfully carried through would result in the official designation of him as *Heimatlos* and therefore ineligible to own or inherit property.[20] As Theodor Mügge described in an 1847 account, nineteenth-century Swiss *Gemeindeversammlungen* had the authority either to

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[18] Gaius' *Institutes* (161 A.D.) cite this precept as follows: "But it is not only by delivery that we acquire things as a matter of natural reason; this applies also to things which we get by first taking and which become ours because previously they belonged to no one […]"(§66) ("*Nec tamen ea tantum, quae traditione nostra fiunt, naturali nobis ratione adquiruntur, sed etiam quae occupando ideo adepti erimus, quia antea nullius essent*"). Gaius, *Institutes*, trans. W.M. Gordon and O.F. Robinson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 152-153; 144-145.

[19] The exact influence of Roman law in Switzerland is difficult to trace, having been mixed with local Germanic and tribal customs since shortly after the fall of the Empire in the fifth century. Moreover, with the establishment of the autonomous *Eidgenossenschaft* in the late middle ages, each canton had its own independently functioning law codes, a scenario which lasted until the first centralized constitution was implemented in 1848. With respect specifically to laws of land use and ownership (*Grundeigentum*), Western Switzerland and Bern adopted Roman *usucapio* guidelines, while Eastern and Central Switzerland did not. See Louis Carlen, *Rechtsgeschichte der Schweiz. Eine Einführung* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1978), 9-30, 50.

[20] Regula Argast, *Staatsbürgerschaft und Nation. Ausschliessung und Integration in der Schweiz 1848-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 118; Thomas Meier and Rolf Wolfensberger, *'Eine Heimat und doch keine': Heimatlose und Nicht-Sesshafte in der Schweiz (16.-19. Jahrhundert)* (Zürich: Chronos, 1998), 68-82.

include or exclude persons from the community's *Bürgerbuch*, which determined whether or not they were allowed to enjoy *Heimatrecht*.[21] It is therefore important to note the present tense of Manz's remark, which implies that the black fiddler has not yet been formally stripped of his citizenship rights ("Wir *haben* so genug *zu tun*, diesem Geiger das Heimatsrecht in unserer Gemeinde abzustreiten"). This syntactical detail, along with the absence of any written confirmation of the fiddler's birth or baptism, make the question of visual recognition all the more pressing. After all, regardless of whether or not there is any ambiguity surrounding the fiddler's legal claim to the land at the time that this conversation between Manz and Marti takes place, his physiognomic appearance has nonetheless established itself in both men's minds as the primary scale by which to determine both the weight and classification of transgression that would result from seizing the field.[22] As a consequence, what seems to weigh upon them most is an unspoken but shared sense that acknowledging the fiddler's visual resemblance of the "verdorbenen Trompeter" [*Erkennung*] might somehow lay the groundwork for a symbolic recognition [*Anerkennung*] of his rightful inheritance of the field, thus circumnavigating the bureaucratic institution of *pro forma* identification.

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[21] Mügge, *Die Schweiz und ihre Zustände. Reiseerinnerungen* Bd. 1 (Hannover: C. F. Kius, 1847), 270-273. Quoted and cited by Jürgen Hein, *'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe.' Erläuterungen und Dokumente* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1971), 77-78. Cf. Edgar Hein, *Gottfried Keller. 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe.' Interpretation* (München: Oldenbourg, 1988), 30-31.

[22] Edgar Hein, by contrast, opines that the legal matter has already been settled in the village by the time that this scene takes place: "Durch die Schuld seiner Vorfahren, die ihr Gemeinderecht offenbar durch eine vagabundierende Lebensweise verscherzt hatten, gehört der schwarze Geiger jetzt zu den Heimatlosen." This would mean that the black fiddler is not registered in the *Bürgerbuch*, and therefore legally not a member of the community. In this case, Manz and Marti would not be transgressing against the formal *Gemeinderecht* by seizing the field, but rather against a universal (but un-codified) moral precept. Though the exact date in which Keller's story is meant to take place is not specified, it is nevertheless worth pointing out that this localized authority of village councils was curtailed by the Swiss *Heimatlosengesetz* of 1850 (i.e., three years after Theodor Mügge's account), Article 1 of which decreed that being deprived of one's communal *Gemeinderecht* did not automatically qualify one as legally homeless (and thereby ineligible to inherit or own property), as this was only the case if cantonal citizenship had been officially revoked: "[…] Nach dieser Bestimmung sind also diejenigen nicht heimathlos, welche wohl ein Kantonsbürgerrecht, jedoch kein Gemeindsbürgerrecht haben, diese Personen sind aber nicht zu verwechseln mit denjenigen, welchen kein Kantonsbürgerrecht, sondern bloße 'Duldung' oder 'Angehörigkeit' zugestanden wird." Hein, *Gottfried Keller. 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,'* ibid.; Schweizerischer Bundesrat, "Bericht des Bundesrathes an die Bundesversammlung über das Gesetz, betreffend die Heimathlosigkeit, vom 30. September 1850," *Schweizerisches Bundesblatt* II. Jg., Bd. III, Nr. 46 (1850): 125-126.

Years later, the fiddler himself will address this very opposition between legal documentation and the unwritten laws of recognition and conscience. Speaking to Sali and Vrenchen, who have encountered him by chance in the same middle field while out walking together, the fiddler confirms that he was denied inheritance of the land because he possessed neither a baptismal certificate nor written proof of his familial origin. "Seht mich nur an," he exclaims, "eure Väter kennen mich wohl und jedermann in diesem Dorfe weiß, wer ich bin, wenn er nur meine Nase ansieht…Ich habe eure Väter angefleht, daß sie mir bezeugen möchten, sie müßten mich nach ihrem Gewissen für den rechten Erben halten…" (112-113). The fiddler's reference to his own facial features stands in parallel with the issue of the middle field itself, for both are distinct, visible and empirical objects that nevertheless pertain to an opaque zone of ambiguity within the law.

This latter point becomes especially interesting when we recall that Keller's text began by suggesting a close relationship between regularity and visibility; that is, with the unimpeded ability of the gaze to perceive and interpret objects both far away and nearby. Interestingly, while a general sense of order and equilibrium was conveyed by this open field of vision, allusions to actual ordinances regarding ownership and citizenship in the text have revealed that the process of visual recognition in fact seems to pose a challenge to the authority of written law. This opposition between formal recognition "in the eyes of the law" by way of civic documentation, on the one hand, and extra-legal recognition solely by means of the naked eye, on the other, will prove highly important in the remainder of the tale.

The Burial

Given that Keller's text has established such a relation between lawfulness and visibility, one can reasonably expect that it will portray transgression against the law in similar

terms of vision and sight. This is borne out by the scene that follows, in which Sali and Vrenchen ceremonially dress, mutilate, and then bury a doll so that it is hidden from view. It has been well established within the secondary literature that the ritualistic burial prefigures later narrative events.[23] What has received less attention, however, is what the rite itself depicts, and it is this question that will motivate my reading of the scene.

Three issues will be of foremost importance: first, the scene establishes imitation as a principle constituent of transgression. Second, the ritual activity consists both in an imitation that is transgressive and in this transgression's concealment, which occurs as part of the sacrifice of a living creature. Lastly, the setting for the burial—the middle field—at this point in the story has no fixed legal status; it simultaneously lies at the center of the community and its laws and, paradoxically, outside of them. This setting of ritual—and, as we shall see, sacrifice—both within and outside of law provides the context for understanding the drowning at the end of Keller's novella as an act of sacrifice that occurs not in order to hide a transgression, but rather in the service of a desire *for* lawfulness that has itself become transgressive.

After Manz and Marti resume their work, the two children wander into the empty field together. After exploring the wild and overgrown space, they decide to sit down near a thistle bush, and Vrenchen begins to dress her doll using the nearby vegetation at her disposal, fashioning a miniature dress out of weeds and a bonnet from a red poppy flower:

> […] und nun sah die kleine Person aus wie eine Zauberfrau, besonders nachdem sie noch ein Halsband und einen Gürtel von kleinen roten Beerchen erhalten. Dann wurde sie hoch in die Stengel der Distel gesetzt und eine Weile mit vereinten Blicken angeschaut, bis der Knabe sie genugsam besehen und mit einem Steine herunterwarf. (79)

[23] Hillard, "Violence, Ritual, and Community," 365; Kaiser, *Das gedichtete Leben*, 298; Hubert Ohl, "Das zyklische Prinzip von Gottfried Kellers Novellenzyklus 'Die Leute von Seldwyla,'" *Euphorion* 63 (1969): 221-222; Martin Swales, "Gottfried Kellers *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,*" 58.

This brief passage introduces two parallel levels of imitation. On one level, Vrenchen simulates the parental act of dressing a small child, and on another the doll takes on the appearance of a "little person." In addition, the doll also assumes a subtle but laden function as the object of a shared gaze, placed carefully in the thistle like a makeshift idol. This sequence of imitation and observation quickly becomes a leitmotif, for once Sali has broken the momentary vigil by hurling a stone at the small figure, Vrenchen immediately begins to undress it so that she can adorn it "aufs neue" (ibid.). Sali's own impulse for repetition intercedes, however, as he quickly snatches the doll away, flinging it about as Vrenchen vainly attempts to retrieve it. He then tears at the little woven body with his fingernails. Having finally had his fill, he tosses the doll to the ground, and Vrenchen reverts once again to an emulation of parenthood, throwing herself over the limp form and weeping as she cradles it in the folds of her apron.

It is at this point that the first dramatic turn (or "*versus*") occurs in the empty field: guilt slowly seeps into Sali following his rampage, and he stands slack and remorseful. As soon as Vrenchen notices this internal shift, she suddenly undergoes a role reversal and begins to attack her former tormenter, beating Sali with the doll. However, it is the doll more than Vrenchen that Sali mimics in response:

> [sie] schlug ihn einigemal mit der Puppe, und er tat, als ob es ihm weh täte, und schrie au! so natürlich, daß sie zufrieden war und nun mit ihm gemeinschaftlich die Zerstörung und Zerlegung fortsetzte. (80)

At the instant in which Sali feigns suffering comparable to what the doll is imagined to have endured, Vrenchen in turn experiences a degree of satisfaction that moves her to become a fellow aggressor in the scene of violence that now repeats itself. Together the children disembowel the doll of its pollard stuffing before setting upon the "Marterleib" once again, dismembering it in a fashion akin to the Bacchic *sparagmos*, until only its head remains intact. Then, seeming to act almost from a sense of methodical obligation, they carefully decapitate it. They both peer curiously into the dark interior of the doll's head,

and decide to fill it with the body's strewn contents, "so daß zum ersten Mal in seinem Leben etwas in ihm steckte" (81).

Then comes the next "turn," for as soon as the skull has been filled, Sali spots a fly hovering nearby and, apparently deciding that a living creature would make a more suitable inhabitant, re-empties the head and, with Vrenchen's assistance, traps the fly inside. The doll's quotidian capacity to imitate life is now transposed into a new, sinister register as the children install it in an elevated post just as Vrenchen had initially done at the beginning of the scene. This time, however, they seem to go about their task in full awareness that they have moved from the innocent realm of playful simulation to that of purposeful *ritual*:

> Die Kinder hielten den Kopf an die Ohren und setzten ihn dann feierlich auf einen Stein; […] das wenige Leben in dem dürftig geformten Bilde erregte die menschliche Grausamkeit in den Kindern, und es wurde beschlossen, das Haupt zu begraben. So machten sie ein Grab und legten den Kopf […] hinein und errichteten über dem Grabe ein ansehnliches Denkmal von Feldsteinen. Dann empfanden sie einiges Grauen, da sie etwas Geformtes und Belebtes begraben hatten, und entfernten sich ein gutes Stück von der unheimlichen Stätte. (ibid.)

On a strictly formal level, this final vignette simply echoes the previous sequences of imitation, transgression, and subsequent repetition in the scene. However, this specific iteration also indicates a pivotal "turn" in the psychology of Sali and Vrenchen: when they ceremoniously place the head with its trapped occupant on top of the stone, it suggests that they are consciously invoking their preceding abuses of the doll. The "menschliche Grausamkeit" that suddenly fills them at the sight of the uncannily alive totemic visage is concomitant with a mutual recognition of their transgressive actions. This acknowledgment, instigated by their shared view of the doll, is subsequently projected back from the macabre face in front of them. Having externalized the awareness of their guilt through this visual exchange with the effigy, the

children promptly put it out of sight in a ceremonial act of burial.[24] More specifically, this act, which occurs outside the periphery of their fathers' vision, simultaneously obscures their own visual recognition of the deed from outside view.

A brief word is clearly due on the resonances of the foregoing scene with modern theories of sacrifice, and with Girard's thought in particular. Though the motif of a surrogate victim's destruction at the hands of a collective agent can certainly be found here,[25] I believe that the mimetic character which Girard attributes to sacrifice per se allows for a richer understanding of sacrifice as it appears in Keller's text.[26] This is to say that here and later in the story, Sali and Vrenchen enact ceremonies that are essentially auto-mimetic insofar as they replicate and imitate not only an original transgression, but also their very own operativity as ritualistic acts.

Girard claims that sacrifice consists of a re-enactment of an original crisis of mimetic vengeance "that was resolved by means of a spontaneously unanimous victimization."[27] However, it is upon this point that the burial scene resists a strictly Girardian analysis, for while Girard asserts an original act of violence to be the implicit referent of any such rite, the focus of Sali and Vrenchen's activity in fact originates as a simulation of behaviors inherent to lawful social existence, not primeval violence. We

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[24] Peter C. Pfeiffer suggests that the children's variant treatment of the doll resembles different historical "stations" of artistic production, in both creative and destructive senses. On the one hand, the doll is repeatedly rendered into new and different forms, but, on the other, the mimetic quality of these re-formulations is underwritten by an overtly negative and destructive impetus. As the doll gradually ceases to resemble a human being, its mimetic function shifts into a symbolic one, culminating in the substitution of the body itself with the *Denkmal* of stones—"Die Repräsentation durch abstrakte Zeichen ersetzt die mimetische." In this way, the gravesite evinces a certain problematic of the written word, of the semiological "burial" of the thing beneath its *sema*. See Pfeiffer, "'Den Tod aus dem Bereich des Romans fernhalten': zur ästhetischen Funktion des Todes in der Literatur des bürgerlichen Realismus," *The Germanic Review* 70 (1995): 15-23, here 20.

[25] Discussions of this mechanism abound throughout *Violence and the Sacred*, though a concise and useful overview of Girard's principle conclusions on the scapegoat effect in particular can be found in his slightly later article "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism," *Berkshire Review* 14 (1979): 9-19.

[26] Here one of Girard's other crucial antecedents, namely Sigmund Freud's *Totem und Tabu* (1913), also becomes a pertinent point of comparison with Keller's narrative. Freud also speaks to the elemental function of imitation and repetition in sacrificial ritual, particularly of an original victim, noting that collective sacrificial punishment for a transgression often comprises a *reciprocation* of the transgression itself. See Freud, *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker. Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 9, ed. Anna Freud, Edward Bibring, and Ernst Kris (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986), here 6-7, 89, 169-170, 182.

[27] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 94.

must remember that the scene begins with Vrenchen dressing the doll to outwardly resemble a human child, *after* which violence erupts. This is followed by their desire for the doll to simulate biological life, a standard childhood impulse which is then fulfilled by gruesome means when they imprison the living fly inside of the lifeless doll. Yet in spite of this difference, Girard's account offers a path for understanding how the ritual *intention* of Sali and Vrenchen's burial rite was not the imitation of an original act of violence carried out in order to establish or maintain law, for the ritualized violence and final interment only occurred after imitations of lawful behavior. Let us now trace how this logic of burial repeats itself in the scene that immediately follows.

The Field of Vision

While the children have been digging, their fathers have been plowing. As soon as the doll has been buried, both farmers complete their day's work; suddenly, one of them—the text does not specify which—turns back his plow and cuts a rigid strip of earth from the adjacent balk of the middle field, thereby increasing the area of his own.[28] He continues this unsanctioned course, and the calm order from earlier in the day seems to reassert itself as "das liebliche Windeswehen" begins to lightly tousle the tip of his cap as it had done in the opening passage of the text (83). Yet this apparent return of rhythmic normalcy in fact accompanies mutual infraction, for the other farmer has also swerved his plow in order to hew his own new furrow from the opposite side of the queach. The sense of symmetrical infringement in this moment is not marked in the physical comportment of both farmers, nor in the altered topography of the land, but instead in each man's uncommented—that is to say, concealed—recognition of the other in the midst of the shared deed:

> Jeder sah wohl, was der andere that, aber keiner schien es zu sehen und sie entschwunden sich wieder, indem jedes Sternbild still am andern vorüberging und hinter diese runde Welt hinabtauchte. (ibid.)

[28] Edgar Hein, ibid., 33.

As in the children's ornamentation and mutilation of the doll, here too the chief characteristic of the fathers' transgression is its foundational re-enactment of lawful and orderly behavior, namely the plowing that was accompanied by neighborly good will, moral equilibrium, and an unhindered view of the surrounding *paysage moralisé*. This is indicated by the recurrence of the wind and star topoi ("Sternbild") that had been used to characterize both men's rhythmic—and non-transgressive—movements across their respective fields "wie zwei untergehende Gestirne" earlier in the day.

In many respects, the greater portion of Manz' and Marti's shared guilt derives not so much from the act of steering their plows off course, nor even from their intuition about the black fiddler's undocumented claim to the land, but more primarily from the mutual recognition of their complicity that remains unspoken ("Jeder sah wohl, was der andere that, aber keiner schien es zu sehen…"). This shared affront that is "seen yet not seen" continues unabated for the next several harvests, "ohne daß ein Menschenauge den Frevel zu sehen schien" (ibid.). Years later, the middle field is at last due to be sold by public auction, and Manz ultimately outbids Marti and is awarded ownership of the land.

It is only after this intercession of civic legality that both men openly address the issue of ownership and transgression with each other, though neither makes direct reference to their misdeed of years before. Instead, after the spectators have dispersed, Manz accuses Marti of having surreptitiously cut a small triangular section out of the field that now legally belongs to him. Marti denies the claim, pointing out that the land is in exactly the same state as it had been during the auction, and furthermore that they had inspected it together beforehand. Manz then exclaims

> "…alles muß zuletzt eine ordentliche grade Art haben; diese drei Aecker sind von jeher so grade nebeneinander gelegen, wie nach dem Richtscheit gezeichnet; es ist ein ganz absonderlicher Spaß von Dir, wenn Du nun einen solchen lächerlichen und unvernünftigen Schnörkel dazwischen bringen willst, und wir beide würden einen

> Uebernamen bekommen, wenn wir den krummen Zipfel da bestehen ließen. Er muß durchaus weg!" (85)

What is interesting about this exchange is the way in which it openly addresses the issue of infringed property rights while simultaneously alluding to the threat posed by the communal gaze. Both topics invoke the original transgression, but only in veiled terms, for although Manz speaks freely of offended boundary lines, it is not in reference to his and Marti's shared act from years before. Rather, he forcefully raises the question of the soil's proper appearance, while the issue of whether or not the field may have rightfully belonged to the black fiddler to begin with remains conspicuously unvoiced.

In essence, then, the recognition of a transgression against conscience that had taken place in the visual exchange between both men continues to hover in suspension through the successive seasons. Manz' pointed concern with the land's visual distribution following the auction—rather than with the question of how it originally came to possess its configuration *before* the auction—is a figurative burial. Until this official intervention of communal law in the fate of the middle field, Manz and Marti simply continue "not to see" what they had first recognized in each other on that September evening. Once the land has attained the status of property by virtue of the auction and sale, however, they effectively make this recognition more lastingly "unseen" by hiding it beneath the field in its new conceptual form. In other words, by openly broaching a *new* transgression against the boundaries of the soil, they retroactively obscure and replace the original one.

This process of "burying" an ethical transgression beneath legal formality[29] is grounded in the concept of the contract, whereby something that is *possessed* as material is transformed into something that is *owned* as property. Here, Hegel's account of the emergence of property in human society proves to be a useful point of reference. In his

[29] Michael Titzmann suggests that both men know the field to belong to the black fiddler by "moralischen Rechtsanspruch," but "ziehen […] sich—und mit ihnen offenkundig die ganze Gemeinde—auf dessen formaljuristische Abwehr zurück." Titzmann, "'Natur' vs. 'Kultur': Kellers 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe' im Kontext der Konstituierung des frühen Realismus," in *Zwischen Goethezeit und Realismus* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 448.

Philosophie des Rechts (1820), Hegel ascribes particular importance to the issue of ownership, arguing that an individual's wish to possess an object in the world marks the first stage of free will's formation.[30] For Hegel, the primal gesture of seizing a desired thing is also a preliminary stage in the development of law, for the object can only become truly *owned* once the conceptual form of property is projected onto it.[31] At the core of this transition from possession to ownership by way of the contract we find a familiar leitmotif from throughout Hegel's writings:

> Der Vertrag setzt voraus, daß die darein Tretenden sich als Personen und Eigentümer *anerkennen;* da er ein Verhältnis des objektiven Geistes ist, so ist das Moment der Anerkennung schon in ihm enthalten und vorausgesetzt.[32]

The teleological significance of the contract rests in its presupposition of mutual recognition between subject and other, not only as legal actors ("Eigentümer"), but as "Personen."[33] The instant of law's emergence into human relations in the form of the contract thus mirrors the original instant of human relation per se, insofar as both pivot upon reciprocal recognition.

This Hegelian schema dovetails nicely with what we have observed in the two preceding scenes: the children's burial involves the literal removal of a recognized transgression from view, while their fathers' "burial" consists in them "seeing yet not seeing" a shared transgression. Both burials incite a series of events that ultimately culminate at the end of the story in the protagonists' drowning. In these early scenes of the novella, the motif of burial establishes being "seen" by law as something to be avoided; in the second half of the novella, by contrast, what Sali and Vrenchen desire is

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[30] Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts. Werke* Bd. 7, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 106 (§44).
[31] Ibid., 119-120 (§55), 121 (§56).
[32] Ibid., 152 (§71, emphasis in the original).
[33] This reciprocal acknowledgment is fundamental not only to the relationship between freedom and law, but also to Hegel's concept of ethos and ethics more generally. See Axel Honneth, *Der Kampf um Anerkennung: zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 174-211; and William E. Conklin, *Hegel's Laws: The Legitimacy of a Modern Legal Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 162-187 (esp. 162, 164, and 170).

precisely *to be "seen"* by law. Ironically, it is this very desire that will lead to them transgressing against the law by imitating it.

Now that we have observed how the "ritual logic" of the children's burial rite recurs in the transgression committed by their fathers, it becomes possible to see how and why there is also a "sacrificial logic" of this burial rite that is decisive for what takes place in the second half of the narrative. In order to see this, however, we must first ask what it is that makes the burial sacrificial—what is sacrificed, in what way is it sacrificed, and for what purpose? On a basic level, the burial is sacrificial in what Jean-Luc Marion refers to as the "common sense" insofar as its ritual work consists first and foremost in the process of removing an object from the normal domain of human experience and use.[34] That is to say, it is a *sacrificium* that has been distilled down to its etymological root of "*sacrum facere*," of *making* something *sacred* solely by making it no longer "profane"; i.e., of making it no longer *usual* by rendering it no longer *usable*.[35]

There is more to it than this, however. We can note that the burial ritual is first and foremost a ritualization of simulative behavior, which in this scene comprised enactments of everyday reality (such as dressing and fearing for a child), and also of decidedly irregular acts of violence such as dismemberment and living burial. Imitation here underlies both innocent and transgressive activities, but most crucial is the temporal

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[34] Marion, "Sketch of a Phenomenological Concept of Sacrifice," in *The Reason of the Gift*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 70-72. Another pertinent thinker in this context is Georges Bataille, whose later work develops the idea that violent sacrifice re-establishes a "true" relationship between the human subject and the world, which the normal order of existence otherwise corrupts. In his most influential theoretical text, Bataille argues that because sacrifice destroys its object without *utilizing* it, the ritual revives an ancient "intimacy" between man and nature wherein things do not exist merely as objects to which use-value is ascribed. (In other words, sacrifice *turns objects back into things*). Moreover, this "profitless consumption" endows sacrifice with a rare capacity to dissolve the "surplus energy" which human existence—by means of both biological life and economic production—constantly creates but can never wholly expend. See Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1993), here 55-61.

[35] The association of utility (from the Latin *usus*) with the profane has deep roots in Western culture. In a Christian (and specifically Augustinian) context, for instance, the category of *usus* is restricted to temporal existence and transitory objects. In a characteristically Neoplatonist gesture, Augustine opposes this earthly mode of use to the spiritual mode of "enjoyment" (*fruitio*), which he reserves for that which is both "eternal" and "true"—namely, the divine, and the Trinity in particular. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. J. F. Shaw, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* Vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Scribner, 1907), 523-524 (I.3-5).

mechanism that underlies imitation itself: repetition. The most immediate objective of the burial is to hide the product of the children's imitative behavior, but the very act of burying in fact re-instantiates the transgression which the ritual seeks to hide in the first place. In other words, that which is intended to be banished from view and immured in the past is in fact made newly visible and present by way of its very concealment; the burial in essence re-materializes what it is being buried in that very same instant.[36] In this respect the children's rite inadvertently assumes one of the most ancient symbolic functions of sacrificial ceremony: namely, to ensure a future repetition of its own performance as well as the conditions of this performance.[37]

However, there is a third way in which the burial constitutes an act of sacrifice rather than merely a ritualistic concealment of transgressive behavior: a life is given (or rather, taken) for the sake of fantasy. That is to say, the fly is killed in the service of simulating life within the doll, and then hiding this grotesque simulation from sight. Concomitantly, the act of imitation has become an act of transgression. *This* is what will be at the core of the drowning as well, which will also consist in an offering up of life for the sake of fantasy, but in a way that is very distinct from the burial: while the burial sacrifices a life in the "common sense" of destroying it, of making it "*sacer*" simply by removing it from the quotidian realm in order to prevent its transgressive mimesis from being discovered, the drowning sacrifices life in exchange for remaining simultaneously *within* the realm of fantasy *and* in the sight of law. Whereas the protagonists' first sacrifice is a burial that removes an illicit object from view, their second sacrifice will offer up their own lives and future in exchange for the momentary fantasy of being what they

[36] Derek Hillard posits that the objective of this sacrificial burial is to create a "cryptic" space in which the buried material can continue to exist insofar as it is hidden (363). By contrast, my thought is not that the "repressed content" gets subliminally re-integrated into the collective consciousness of society by virtue of being repressed. Rather, on a more straightforward and immediate level, because the object of the sacrifice is precisely the simulation of a previous transgression (i.e., living burial), the children ultimately substitute this original, past transgression with a re-inscribed variant of itself in the instant of the present transgression.

[37] Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. W. D. Halls (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 89.

wish to be seen as. The medium of their final sacrifice will therefore not be concealment in the earth, but submergence in the water that borders the community. Within a private *Augenblick*, the two lovers briefly disappear from public view, only to re-emerge into it in the end.

II.

The River

Fittingly, in the second half of the narrative, Sali and Vrenchen develop an awareness of their vulnerable exposure to the gaze of their community. This new awareness is most marked in the scene of their reunion on the public riverbank after years of separation during Manz and Marti's estrangement. Given that the text's dialectic of lawfulness and sacrificiality will develop in correspondence with visual recognition between the private and communal spheres, it is worth considering the sequence in some detail.

As the feud between the two families intensifies, Manz and Marti both pour all of their money into lawsuits and counterclaims over the small corner of soil, and Sali and Vrenchen make concerted efforts to avoid seeing one another. This situation endures for several years but is brought to an abrupt end when both fathers and their children unexpectedly meet at the river, for the vitriol of Manz and Marti's legal entrenchment has bled both men dry, and they must resort to fishing in order to provide for their families. The banks of the river are populated with others that have also found themselves compelled to make their living outside of the community. The scene is rich with foreshadowings of Sali and Vrenchen's climactic drowning that will in part respond to this state of socio-economic exigency brought about by Manz and Marti.[38] The

[38] This, understandably, is the line of interpretation favored by post-war Marxian readers of the novella, most notably Georg Lukács and Hans Richter, and kept alive into the 1970s by critics such as Heinrich Richartz and Gert Sautermeister. Although this angle eventually fell out of fashion in the 1980s and 1990s, Keller scholarship lately has been playing host to an upsurge in economics-inspired analysis. See, for instance, Jörg Kreienbrock, "Das Kreditparadies Seldwyla. Zur Beziehung von Ökonomie und Literatur in Gottfried Kellers *Die Leute von Seldwyla*" and Uwe Seja, "*Seldwyla*—a Microeconomic Inquiry," both in

bedraggled figures scattered along the shore drape feet, limbs, and angling rods into the water; one man stands on a stone in the shallows, his feet so black with grime and dirt "trotz des Aufenthaltes am Wasser…daß man glaubte, er habe die Stiefel anbehalten," an image that suggests nature's inability to wash completely clean every stain of societal plight (99).[39]

In fact, the river as a topos can even be said to embody an ancient exception to laws regarding personal possessions and property, for the Roman legal tradition established that all flowing bodies of water (*aqua profluens*) could never be subject to ownership.[40] The river in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* exemplifies this legal status of *flumen publicum*, reappearing throughout the remainder of the narrative as a counterpoint to various forms of societal privation: both the derelict townsfolk as well as Sali and Vrenchen, whose ideal future together in the community is eventually occluded, are drawn to the unclaimable river.[41]

Gottfried Keller: Die Leute von Seldwyla. Kritische Studien (op. cit.), 117-135 and 93-117, respectively. Cf. Muschg, *Gottfried Keller* (München: Kindler Verlag, 1977); and Richard R. Ruppel, *Gottfried Keller and his Critics: A Case Study in Scholarly Criticism* (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), esp. chapters 4 and 6.

[39] Diana Schilling observes that in Keller's novella, the topos of the river loses the classic metaphorical value that is still to be found in contemporary *Dorfgeschichten* of the nineteenth century. For instance, here the river does not signify wellbeing and prosperity, and connects rather than separates the rural village from the larger town of Seldwyla. It has become a site for *Fallierten* who are in stasis rather than moving ahead: "zum Fluß kehren diejenigen zurück, für die das Leben keine Bewegung mehr hat." This differs substantially from more Symbolist readings such as Jürgen Rothenberg's, according to which the flowing river (whether in this particular story or as a broader leitmotif in Keller's prose) represents the linear openness of diachrony and Heraclitian "Wechseldauer." See Schilling, *Kellers Prosa* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 119; and Rothenberg, *Gottfried Keller: Symbolgehalt und Realitätserfassung seines Erzählens* (Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 1976), 62, 99.

[40] This is most explicitly codified by Justinian's *Institutes* (II.1): "Thus by natural law these things are common for all: air, flowing water, the sea and its shores […]" (§1); "Rivers and ports are also public for all: thus it is also a common right to fish in ports and in rivers" (§2) ("*Et quidem naturali iure communia sunt omnium haec: aer et aqua profluens et mare et per hoc litora maris* […] *Flumina autem omnia et portus publica sunt: ideoque ius piscandi omnibus commune est in portubus fluminibusque*"). Justinian, *Institutes*, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis* Vol. 1, ed. Paul Krueger (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1993), 10 (translations mine). Friedrich Carl von Savigny would carry this ancient idea into German law at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the following image: "So besitzt der Schiffer sein Schiff, aber nicht das Wasser, auf welchem er fährt, obgleich er sich beider zu seinen Zwecken bedient." Savigny, *Das Recht des Besitzes: eine Civilistische Abhandlung* (Gießen: Heyer, 1803), 2. Cf. Hans W. Baade, "Springs, Creeks and Groundwater in Nineteenth-Century German Roman-Law Jurisprudence with a Twentieth-Century Postscript," in *Comparative and Private International Law: Essays in Honor of John Henry Merryman on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. David S. Clark (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1990), 66.

[41] It is interesting to juxtapose the *flumen publicum*, as something that cannot be owned, with the middle field in the beginning of the novella as a *res nullius*, as something that *could* be owned, but simply is not. Critics have pointed out that the field and river mirror one another as settings, but the fact that they also

It is against this backdrop that the two embittered farmers encounter one another on opposite banks. As Manz and Marti begin to shout slurs and accusations, Sali attempts to glimpse Vrenchen who, consistent with her habit of the previous few years, avoids his gaze and stares at the ground. Manz and Marti suddenly run to a narrow bridge spanning the water, colliding in the middle with a cascade of fists and curses. As both children rush towards the mêlée, Vrenchen finally casts a glance at Sali, whose attention is focused on freeing his father from Marti's grip. This network of missed gazes between the protagonists finally coheres within a dramatic instant of visual exchange:

> […] in diesem Augenblicke erhellte ein Wolkenriß, der den grellen Abendschein durchließ, das nahe Gesicht des Mädchens, und Sali sah in dies ihm so wohlbekannte und doch so viel anders und schöner gewordene Gesicht. Vrenchen sah in diesem Augenblicke auch sein Erstaunen und es lächelte ganz kurz und geschwind mitten in seinem Schrecken und in seinen Tränen ihn an. (103)

This mutual recognition in the water is then followed by a prefiguration of Sali and Vrenchen's death, for as Manz and Marti at last cease their struggle and turn away from each other, their children "atmeten kaum und waren still wie der Tod, gaben sich aber im Wegwenden und Trennen, ungesehen von den Alten, schnell die Hände, welche vom Wasser und von den Fischen feucht und kühl waren" (104).

In this moment, the recurring motif of a shared recognition is set against the gaze of the collective other (the fathers, in this case) that can either witness or overlook the meaning produced in the private exchange. The setting and context of this scene provide an interesting variation on the ancient trope of the *locus amoenus*, for the enclosure of the riverbed in which Sali and Vrenchen share a fleeting glance, "ungesehen von den Alten," is nevertheless at the center of public attention and concern. Keller's depiction of this pastoral *Augenblick*, a small vestige of the classical idyll planted in the somber soil of a contemporary landscape, at once brings to mind the seventh Canto of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* (1798) in which the eponymous protagonists meet at a well that lies outside

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correspond with these opposing categories of law shows them to serve as poles of the narrative in more than just a topographical sense. See Honold, "Vermittlung und Verwilderung," 465.

the edges of the community. At one point they glimpse each other in the reflection of the water, "…sahen gespiegelt ihr Bild in der Bläue des Himmels," and then, as they begin to set off towards town, "schauten beide noch einmal / in den Brunnen zurück, und süßes Verlangen ergriff sie" (VII.41; 106-107).

Sadly, the chain of events that stretches out from Sali and Vrenchen's seemingly auspicious *Augenblick* does not mirror that of Goethe's poem.[42] In the remainder of Keller's tale there are a number of confrontations between the gazes of the private and public spheres prefigured by the river scene, but there is one in particular that contains the greatest significance for the relation between law, transgression and sacrifice. Most importantly, it provides the impetus for the culminative drowning scene.

The Sunday Walk

In the weeks that follow, Sali and Vrenchen's love as well as their misfortune grow in equal measure. After visiting each other secretly the day after their fathers' altercation at the river, the two are discovered by Marti, who attacks his daughter in a rage, and whom Sali in turn strikes on the head with a stone. The injury turns out to have permanently affected Marti's mental capacities, and he is eventually committed to an institute for the insane and infirm. For Sali and Vrenchen, all possibility of a respectable marriage in their community at once seems irretrievably lost: "Dies würde immer ein schlechter Grundstein unserer Ehe sein und wir beide nie sorglos werden, nie!" Vrenchen laments (123). They resign themselves to the necessity of leaving the village in order to find work and livelihoods elsewhere. In the face of this unhappy reality, they decide to spend one last day together in which they can live out their fantasy of happiness and repletion as a young, newlywed couple. This fantasy begins within—and is constituted by—their

[42] See Karl Eibl, "*Anamnesis* des 'Augenblicks.' Goethes poetischer Gesellschaftsentwurf in *Hermann und Dorothea*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 58.1 (1984): 111-138.

appearance to the collective gaze of society.[43] Sali plans to sell his pocket watch in order to buy new shoes for Vrenchen, who wishes to dance with him at the parish fair the next day, and the following morning both dress in their Sunday best (or their closest possible approximations thereof).

This visual simulation of an ideal reality promptly crosses over into active deception, for a neighbor drops by and, catching sight of the two, expresses surprise and curiosity over their changed appearance. Without hesitating, Vrenchen, "lächelnd und mitteilsam, ja beinahe herablassend," says that Sali is her fiancé, and furthermore that the bitter rift between the two families has ebbed (131). Before the neighbor can respond to this dramatic statement, Vrenchen's prevarication picks up momentum and she goes on to assert that Sali has won the lottery, allowing them to purchase a home and plan a wedding. With this initial fabrication, the veracity of which the neighbor calls into question three separate times before finally accepting the story,[44] Sali and Vrenchen effectively commit to transforming their private fantasy of being seen into an actual public charade. This transition into the full view of the community is initiated by the neighbor, who, moved by Vrenchen's tale of unexpected fortune, lists and extols the paradigmatically bourgeois virtues she seems to evince, exclaiming:

> Dir wird es gut gehen, da müßte keine Gerechtigkeit in der Welt sein! Schön, sauber, klug und weise bist Du, arbeitsam und geschickt zu allen Dingen! Keine ist besser und feiner als Du, in und außer dem Dorfe, und wer Dich hat, der muß meinen, er sei im Himmelreich… (133)

Heaven on earth indeed seems to be what Sali and Vrenchen are bound for as they set out into the resplendent September morning,[45] making their way across bucolic meadows towards the neighboring village where they can be seen together without being recognized for their true identity, and instead be taken simply for "zwei Glückliche, die

[43] Cf. Alan Corkhill, "Fortune Maketh the Man? Notions of *Glück* in the *Seldwyla* Novellas," 35.
[44] "Es ist nicht wahr, Du lügst mich an, Kind! [...] Geh' mir weg, Du bist eine häßliche Lügnerin! [...] Allweg, du Teufelshexlein, was Du bist!" (ibid.)
[45] Cf. Gerhard Kaiser, "Sündenfall, Paradies und himmlisches Jerusalem in Kellers 'Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe,'" *Euphorion* 65 (1971): 21-48.

sich von Rechts wegen angehören" (135). As will be discussed in greater detail shortly, this qualification of *Recht*—as opposed, crucially, to *Gesetz*—not only limns the object of Sali and Vrenchen's desire, but also comprises the ethical framework that will designate their behavior as transgressive. After all, it is the lawful status of mutual *Angehörigkeit* in marriage which the two fervently wish for and in turn imitate for each other and for strangers, and yet it is the very quality of lawfulness intrinsic to this desired condition which their public simulation of it sacrifices. This is not yet at hand, however, and as they arrive at the next village and are seated at an inn, their spirits are high, "denn die Wirtin schien sie für *rechtliche* junge Leutchen zu halten, die man anständig bedienen müsse" (136, emphasis added). After a meal that leaves them content from hearty food as well as from the fond attention the innkeepers bestow on them, Sali ceremoniously signals that the time has come to leave

> indem er ehrbar und geschäftig zum Aufbruch mahnte, als ob sie einen bestimmten und wichtigen Weg zu machen hätten. Die Wirtin und der Wirt begleiteten sie bis vor das Haus und entließen sie auf das wohlwollendste wegen ihres guten Benehmens, trotz der durchscheinenden Dürftigkeit, und das arme junge Blut verabschiedete sich mit den besten Manieren von der Welt und wandelte sittig und ehrbar von hinnen. (ibid.)

Even after they have left the town and wander alone into an oak grove they maintain this respectable comportment for one another's benefit, being only momentarily shaken from their reverie by a twinge of melancholy that is dispelled almost as swiftly when they encounter other young people walking in groups, happy and free in their progress through the countryside. Sali and Vrenchen continue to the next village, carrying themselves as "fein und ordentlich" as their fellow *promenadeurs* (138).

As they enter another inn, their mimicry once again meets with a believing audience as the hostess remarks:

> "Allem Anschein nach… seid ihr ein junges Brautpaar […] ihr seht wenigstens hübsch und brav aus und braucht euch nicht zu verbergen. Ordentliche Leute können etwas zuwege bringen, wenn sie so jung zusammenkommen und fleißig und treu sind […] es freut mich, euch anzusehen, so ein schmuckes Pärchen seid ihr!" (139)

As in the previous tavern, Sali and Vrenchen's performance is substantiated by the recognition and praise of the "Anschein" it seeks to enact. They therefore continue to play their parts, and the spectators' willing validation of the spectacle only redoubles their conviction. They move on to the market square where, when the other is not looking, they both secretly procure rings to give each other when the time finally comes to part.

Here, however, their simulation is brought to an abrupt end. As they stand absorbed in their gifts and in each other, passers by begin to take notice and, as a number of them hail from Sali and Vrenchen's home village, they quickly recognize the two: "so waren sie erkannt worden…'Ei seht!' hieß es, 'das ist ja wahrhaftig das Vrenchen Marti und der Sali aus der Stadt!...seht doch, seht!'" (144). Whispers slowly course through the growing group of onlookers and, when Sali and Vrenchen finally look up and see the ring of observers watching them, "erschauten sie nichts als gaffende Gesichter von allen Seiten" (ibid.).

Vrenchen is suddenly overcome with anxiety at the countless staring faces and becomes feverish and pale, so Sali quickly leads her away. As they retreat, he remarks, "'hier könnten wir nicht tanzen…wir würden hier wenig Freude haben, wie es scheint!'" (145). This is pointedly due to the preceding instant of reciprocal recognition between them and the community, for it was at this moment that the nature of Sali and Vrenchen's naïve imitation is transformed from make believe into disgrace. Though the two have freely indulged in their own illusion throughout the day, they nevertheless have not reached the point of mistaking it for reality in the same way that their successive audiences have. It is not until they see themselves being seen "*in flagrante imitatione*" that their charades retroactively assume a transgressive quality. This transition seems to be simultaneous with their self-recognition within the "gaffende" gaze of the collective, as signaled by the swift onset of Vrenchen's feverishness and pallor. Ironically, it is in the instant of being *accurately* recognized by members of their own community that Sali and

Vrenchen cease to belong to it. Sali voices this sentiment plainly: "'Wir wollen gehen, wo das arme Volk sich lustig macht, zu dem wir jetzt auch gehören, da werden sie uns nicht verachten […]'" (ibid.).

The discomfort and shame that fill Sali and Vrenchen in this exchange have two immediate sources. On the one hand, the old stains left by their families' bitter feud that culminated in Sali's violence against Marti are once again thrown into the harsh and unsparing light of public apprehension. However, I wish to suggest that an additional locus of guilt can be traced to the protagonists' sustained act of imitation whose true referent is also laid bare in this instant of recognition. Key to this is the theme of desire's intrinsic connection to law, which operates in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* within two distinct paradigms: first, in the early scene of Manz' and Marti's theft of the middle field, one can identify the Pauline concept of individual desire emerging in reaction to—and inspiration by—specific prohibitions, a dialectical relation wherein, as Jacques Lacan puts it, "the Law causes our desire to flare up only in relation to the Law."[46]

In the second half of the story, by contrast, this causal diptych closes in upon itself, for what Sali and Vrenchen desire *is* the edifice of law itself as represented by the bourgeois paradigm of an official marriage that is recognized by society. Moreover, it is the assumed implausibility of this latter element—i.e., the communal benediction—that underscores it for them as a *sine qua non*. This logical bind leads them to yet another one, for they decide to imitate a married couple and thereby to elicit the outward recognition [*Erkennung*] from others that they so desperately long for. Yet according to their own moral parameters, the state of lawful marriage which they are imitating is itself predicated upon a conceptual, formal recognition [*Anerkennung*] having already taken place.

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[46] Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), 83-84. In allusion to the above-mentioned Pauline notion of this relationship between law, desire, and transgression, Lacan cites chapter 7 of the Epistle to the Romans: "[…] Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law […] But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead" (7:7-8).

Thus, when a true recognition finally *does* occur in the town square, the anxiety and discomfort it induces is not due simply to the fact that Sali and Vrenchen have pretended to be something that they are not. More particularly, it is due to the fact that what they have consciously simulated up to this point is the very appearance of *Rechtigkeit*, *Ordentlichkeit*, *Sittigkeit* and *Ehrbarkeit* (135, 136, 138, 139). That is, the ethical categories which they imitate are in essence adverse to behaviors such as imitation. Consequently, the double process of knowingly mimicking lawfulness, morality, and honorability—*and* of these imitations being misrecognized as genuine and real—is concomitant with an external disturbance of, and an internal contradiction in, the constitutive terms of these ethical categories. While assuming the likeness of a respectably married couple does not necessarily bespeak a legal impediment to marriage at some future point in time,[47] the more complex act of outwardly invoking a social category of lawful order per se—and being recognized for doing so—instigates Sali and Vrenchen's moral exclusion from this order; *Erkennung* has occluded *Anerkennung*. As with their abuse of the doll and with Manz and Marti's illicit plowing of the middle field at the beginning of the story, the transgressive status of the act is concretized within an interpersonal and reciprocal gaze that first transfixes them and then impels them to flee.

III.

Das Paradiesgärtlein

The "arme Volk" to whom Sali and Vrenchen feel they now belong is made up of fellow outcasts from proper society such as debtors, gypsies, and *Heimatlosen*. Their address is a formerly well-kept tavern in the countryside that has since fallen into disrepair and disrepute, though it has retained its original name: *das Paradiesgärtlein*. The establishment's

[47] Bernd Neumann points out that until 1874 Swiss cantons could legally intervene in marriages between persons who did not have possessions, which in the contemporary setting of Keller's novella would very likely have posed a substantial obstacle to Sali and Vrenchen's wedding plans, given their families' respective states of destitution. Neumann, *Gottfried Keller: eine Einführung in seine Werke* (Königtstein: Athenäum, 1982), 137.

explicit invocation of Eden clearly mirrors the novella's setting and events, for both the building itself as well as its current patrons comprise a postlapsarian ruin of the world which Sali and Vrenchen have felt compelled to abandon. The interior of this "little garden of paradise" is covered with Rococo images and effigies of saints, angels, and airborne cherubim playing various musical instruments. However, the once gilded details and lively hues have become faded by time and exposure to the elements, and although the space is filled with music and energetically dancing guests that at first seem to echo the cheery ornamentation of the frescoes above, the wildness of the tune and the intoxication of the undulating figures belies the once cozy and respectable atmosphere. Vrenchen, whose heavy spirits are suddenly leavened by the opportunity at last to dance, climbs the stairs with Sali to the attic and the two fall in with the "verlumpte Leute aus Seldwyla" (ibid.).

The *Paradiesgärtlein* thus functions as the venue not only for a simulation but a perversion of the bourgeois paradigm which Sali and Vrenchen have wished to take their place within. Moreover, by incorporating themselves into this debased vision of their desired (and lost) paradise in a final attempt to experience some form of it, however decrepit, they in effect re-instantiate the conditions of their transgressive imitations from throughout the day. This is first marked in a sequence of mutual recognition that functions as a striking inversion of the one that occurred only shortly beforehand in the village square. After the dance comes to an end, Sali and Vrenchen look around and suddenly spot the black fiddler, who returns their gaze from the elevated post of a makeshift stage:

> Vrenchen…erschrak über den schwarzen Geiger, in dessen Nähe sie standen […] Sali erschrak auch, als er den Geiger erblickte; dieser grüßte sie aber auf das freundlichste […] und nun waren sie froh, hier einen Bekannten zu haben und gewissermaßen unter dem besonderen Schutze des Geigers zu stehen. (146-147)

It is worth reflecting upon the significance of the fact that this recognition—which is both an empirical *Erkennung* and a symbolic *Anerkennung*—is enacted by the black fiddler

himself, whose own physiognomic recognizability had overshadowed Manz and Marti's original misdeed. As such, it operates simultaneously as the negative reflection and completion of the trajectory inaugurated by the opening scenes of Keller's tale.

Having arrived at the end of this ring structure, Sali and Vrenchen feel despair over their original resolution to bid each other farewell the next day. Though that very morning they had accepted the reality of a life apart in exchange for remaining faithful to their shared ideal,[48] this ideal now seems to them to be more out of reach and frail than ever before, and they at last stagger beneath the weight of their own imperative:

> Das Gefühl, in der bürgerlichen Welt nur in einer ganz ehrlichen und gewissenfreien Ehe glücklich sein zu können, war in [Sali] ebenso lebendig wie in Vrenchen, und in beiden verlassenen Wesen war es die letzte Flamme der Ehre […] Sie mochten so gern fröhlich und glücklich sein, aber nur auf einem guten Grund und Boden, und dieser schien ihnen unerreichbar, während ihr wallendes Blut am liebsten gleich zusammengeströmt wäre. (150)

Wracked with sadness and indecision, the two are suddenly happened upon by the black fiddler, who proposes a simple solution to their woes, suggesting that they join him and his compatriots in the wilderness, where they can finally be together and eschew the society, laws, and mores that have already eschewed them. However, Vrenchen rejects the possibility of comparable happiness within this parallel dimension of lawlessness, moral unaccountability and lack of consequence, "'denn da geht es auch nicht nach meinem Sinne zu"' (152).

As soon as Sali and Vrenchen rejoin the company inside the tavern, a bizarre scene ensues. The black fiddler officiates a ritualistic simulation of a wedding, mounting

[48] It is unclear, both in the narrative itself as well as in the secondary literature, whether there are implied legal barriers to the possibility of Sali and Vrenchen relocating to a different community altogether and marrying there instead. After all, Swiss laws of *Niederlassungsfreiheit*, which would have allowed them to move wherever they pleased, were introduced by the *Bundesverfassung* in 1848 (Art. 41) and subsequently developed between 1866 and 1874. Regardless of this context, however, the story makes clear that their ideal existence is linked to their *own* village's recognition of them, not purely to the legal category of marriage—it is *Recht, Erkennung*, and *Anerkennung* rather than *Gesetz* that are at issue in the fantasy. On the above-mentioned laws of relocation, see Andreas Heusler, *Schweizerische Verfassungsgeschichte* (Aalen: Scientia-Verlag, 1968), 377; Hans-Peter Bärtschi, *Industrialisierung, Eisenbahnschlachten und Städtebau. Die Entwicklung des Zürcher Industrie- und Arbeiterstadtteils Aussersihl. Ein vergleichender Beitrag zur Architektur- und Technikgeschichte* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1983), 239; and John B. Lyon, *Out of Place: German Realism, Displacement, and Modernity* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 170.

an irreverent yet nakedly faithful staging of the protagonists' original fantasy of a respectable marriage recognized by the community:

> "Da kommt unser Hochzeitpaar!" rief der Geiger…Sie wurden an den Tisch genötigt und flüchteten sich vor sich selbst an denselben hin; sie waren froh, nur für den Augenblick unter Leuten zu sein. […] Sali und Vrenchen waren still und hielten sich umschlungen; auf einmal gebot der Geiger Stille und führte eine spaßhafte Zeremonie auf, welche eine Trauung vorstellen sollte. Sie mußten sich die Hände geben und die Gesellschaft stand auf und trat der Reihe nach zu ihnen, um sie zu beglückwünschen und in ihrer Verbrüderung willkommen zu heißen. Sie ließen es geschehen, ohne ein Wort zu sagen, und betrachteten es als einen Spaß, während es sie doch kalt und heiß durchschauerte. (152-153)

The integral role of imitation and conscience in this mock ceremony once again brings Girard to mind. In particular, one recalls his anthropological account of how in certain societies the law forbids imitative behavior due to its capacity to create a simulacrum of its object that could be used for malevolent rituals.[49] That is, in such communities imitation is not only something that stands in opposition to law, but is something which law must actively combat in order to protect the cohesion of society. According to Girard, there are two ways in which imitative behavior might threaten this cohesion: first, it impedes a general ability to distinguish between authentic and replicated material (i.e., it poses the same hazard to the polis that Plato ascribes to mimesis in *The Republic*). Second, the creation of such simulacra makes it possible for socially unsanctioned rituals (e.g., sympathetic magic) to be performed. Because law's purpose (at least in this context) is to regulate official rituals of social life, it therefore also exists in order to prevent *unofficial* rituals.[50] In Girard's reading, then, imitation is a sharp thorn in the flesh of the law.

A similar dynamic seems to be at the core of the fake wedding that has just taken place in the *Paradiesgärtlein*. From the perspective of both the protagonists and of the assembled company, the parodic ceremony simultaneously theatricalizes and supplants

[49] Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 10-11.
[50] Ibid., 14-15.

Sali and Vrenchen's bourgeois ideal, symbolized as it has been throughout the novella by the title and sacrament of marriage.[51] Although the fiddler's ritual announces the possibility of a life together within an inversion of *Bürgertum*,[52] and while Sali and Vrenchen on the surface regard the entire pageantry merely as "Spaß," on a deeper and unspoken level something inside of them begins to writhe. It is almost as if the earlier public recognition in town that had flooded them with unease recurs in a new form, as evidenced by their visceral reaction to the mimicked substitution of proper marriage ("kalt und heiß durchschauerte"), which echoes Vrenchen's symptoms from the market square ("Es wurde Vrenchen bang und heiß, es wurde bleich und rot…").

Crucially, however, this time the recognition does not originate from the external "gaffende Gesichter" of the community, but rather from within Sali and Vrenchen themselves. The fiddler's ceremonial mimicry both culminates and perverts their own imitations, and by virtue of the assembled company's enthusiastic validation of the rite—i.e., in their *Anerkennung* of Sali and Vrenchen as newlyweds—the formal coordinates of the fantasy are simultaneously fulfilled and distorted. Just as they had been stricken with "Grausamkeit" as children as soon as the mangled doll literalized its mimetic function to simulate life by suddenly having an actual living creature trapped inside of it, here too the actualization of their desire to be taken for a "Hochzeitpaar" ultimately unmasks them before an interior gaze of conscience.

It is crucial to notice that these "unmaskings" occur not merely because imitative behavior is recognized as such (after all, during both the burial scene and the Sunday walk Sali and Vrenchen had contentedly carried on with their simulations without a hint

[51] Interestingly, the aforementioned *Heimatlosengesetz* suggests a correlation between homelessness and co-habitation that occurs outside the bounds of legal marriage (*Konkubinatsverhältnisse*). See "Bericht des Bundesrathes," 135. Cf. Meier and Wolfensberger, *Heimatlose und Nicht-Sesshafte in der Schweiz*, 39-61.
[52] The black fiddler's earlier proposition to Sali and Vrenchen had specifically emphasized a rejection of the bureaucratic, civic, and moralistic trappings of bourgeois society: "Ich rate Euch, nehmt Euch, wie Ihr seid, und säumet nicht. Kommt mit mir und meinen guten Freunden in die Berge, da brauchet Ihr keinen Pfarrer, kein Geld, keine Schriften, keine Ehre, kein Bett, nichts als euern guten Willen! […] Also kurz entschlossen, haltet gleich hier Hochzeit und kommt mit uns, dann seid Ihr aller Sorgen los und habt Euch für immer und ewiglich, solange es Euch gefällt wenigstens…" (151).

of guilt, up to a certain point). Rather, the unmasking occurs only when the *product* of imitative behavior is recognized as such, and is treated nevertheless as a functional substitute for the real. Or, to use the terms of Girard's model, law (and therefore conscience) rear up as soon as ritual becomes possible; and ritual becomes possible as soon as a simulacrum is willingly employed in lieu of the real thing it simulates. It is at the moment that the black fiddler and his companions make Sali and Vrenchen the object of their imitative ritual that the two suddenly register guilt rather than shame, just like the sounds of the entombed fly from within the doll had awoken them to a jarring sense of transgression that had not been there previously. Encircled by the homeless band in the derelict tavern, Sali and Vrenchen seem at once to register that their capacity to subsist upon simulation and make believe has not outlasted the day, leaving them to confront the somber possibility that neither their fantasy of a respectable village existence nor its grotesque reflection in the Saturnalian *Paradiesgärtlein* can suffice as hiding places from self-recognition.

The final scene of the novella will stage a sacrifice consisting in a double negation, for Sali and Vrenchen's last moments are devoted to a *second* imitated wedding ceremony that, in re-imagining their original fantasy of marriage, aims to replace the black fiddler's pasquinade of it while at the same time solidifying their own guilt. Keller's genius was to set this concluding instance of ceremonial repetition, reflection, and transformation on the banks of the river, and from there into the water itself.

Last Rites

The company rises and, led by the fiddler's playing and the influence of drink, moves out into the night. Sali and Vrenchen follow "ihr tobendes Hochzeitgeleite," making their way through the countryside in a nocturnal counterpoint to their walk earlier that day. They eventually find themselves on the hill abutting the three parallel fields where the

novella began, and the party lingers for a while before continuing on, but Sali and Vrenchen remain behind. Finally left to confront their decision to flout the black fiddler's proposition and instead hold fast to their original fantasy, they are once again enveloped by sorrow at the thought of their impending separation.

Hearing the gentle rushing of the river's currents nearby, they walk down to the shore and exchange the rings they had secretly bought for each other at the fair that afternoon. Vrenchen completes the ceremony in her pronouncement: "nun sind wir aber doch verlobt und versprochen, Du bist mein Mann und ich Deine Frau, wir wollen es einmal einen Augenblick denken…" (155). It is at this moment that the simple but earnest performance of a nuptial vow activates all the structural and thematic mechanisms of ritual that have been observed in the story thus far. An inner change overcomes Sali, who, we are now told, has not regarded the question of marrying Vrenchen up to this instant as "ein bestimmtes Entweder – Oder, als ein unmittelbares Sein oder Nichtsein" to the same degree that she has. However, as they embrace, he instantaneously shares in her inner state:

> Aber jetzt ging ihm endlich ein Licht auf und das weibliche Gefühl des jungen Mädchens ward in ihm auf der Stelle zu einem wilden und heißen Verlangen und eine glühende Klarheit erhellte ihm die Sinne […] Vrenchen fühlte trotz aller eigenen Leidenschaft auf der Stelle diesen Wechsel und ein heftiges Zittern durchfuhr sein ganzes Wesen […] ihre ringgeschmückten Hände… faßten sich fest, wie von selbst eine Trauung vollziehend, ohne den Befehl eines Willens. (156)

Perhaps much more than the black fiddler's "spaßhafte Zeremonie," the crucial precursor to this cathartic *Augenblick* is their fleeting encounter on this very same shore during their fathers' altercation, when their gazes and (then ringless) hands had momentarily met. As soon as this spontaneous unification of feeling and conviction has taken place—and within it an actualization "wie von selbst," as opposed to deliberate imitation, of nuptial union—Sali and Vrenchen resolve upon a sacrificial culmination of the rite: "dort ist das tiefe Wasser – dort scheidet uns niemand mehr und wir sind zusammen gewesen – ob kurz oder lang, das kann uns dann gleich sein" (ibid.).

With this statement, Sali names the objective of their imminent drowning as actualizing and then preserving, through death, a singular instant of shared experience. In a further echo and variation of rituality in Keller's story, this moment centers upon a reciprocal recognition between subject and other to an almost mystical degree, and remains unseen by other characters. However, the culmination of this union will also occur outside even the reader's view: the two make for an anchored hay barge floating near the shore, and as Sali carries Vrenchen through the shallows towards the vessel, she is suddenly reminded of that day at the river, recalling aloud how cold and wet their hands had been when they had secretly clasped them together, "ungesehen von den Alten" (157). They embark, and as the boat drifts into the current the reader is, for the first time, restricted access to a private moment between the protagonists. We are permitted only to follow the ship's winding and gradual progress along the river from afar, thus allowing Sali and Vrenchen's consummation to remain wholly *ungesehen*. As day begins to break, the brief voyage comes to an end: "Als [das Schiff] sich der Stadt näherte, glitten im Froste des Herbstmorgens zwei bleiche Gestalten, die sich fest umwanden, von der dunklen Masse herunter in die kalten Fluten" (158). The drowning that goes unwitnessed by fellow characters thus signals a final sacrifice of Sali and Vrenchen's wish to see and be seen as bona fide members of the community.

"…ob kurz oder lang, das kann uns dann gleich sein"

In order to come away with a complete account of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, we must dwell a while longer over the question of what significance the drowning bears for the narrative as a whole. On a simple level, it fulfills a structural function of sacrifice insofar as it stages an ultimate relinquishment of a desired end. Moreover, the implicit transgression (i.e., sexual intercourse outside of *legal*, not simply simulated, wedlock) at the heart of this act precludes a *Verwirklichung* of the married life together which it is

traditionally meant to symbolically inaugurate. As a consequence, disappearing from the above-surface sphere of observability into the underwater sphere of non-visibility and non-differentiation is an especially fitting mode of sacrifice.

If we regard the scene of drowning as a kind of culmination of the wedding rite—corresponding in spatial terms with a movement from the banks of the river to its unbounded depths—one is necessarily brought to reflect upon the events preceding both of these linked instants. The most pivotal of these, as suggested already, is Sali and Vrenchen's mutual *Erkennung* on the shore during their fathers' confrontation. This diptych of scenes near and in the water points to a trajectory of Sali and Vrenchen's brief time together that is structured around instants of reciprocal visual exchange and that reaches its completion within the moment of nuptial *Anerkennung*. The subsequent act of drowning thus highlights a sacrifice of the future fulfillment of an ideal in exchange for indulgence in a fleeting, present approximation of this fulfillment.[53] What is offered up is therefore not simply a desired status and moral framework, but also the temporal structure that underpins both.

Like the living burial of the fly at the beginning of the story, the drowning is also a sacrifice of life for the sake of fantasy and imitation. Sali and Vrenchen's fantasy

[53] The final section of the text has an interesting publication history that seems to bespeak vacillations in Keller's moralistic intentions for the narrative. The 1856 version had an extended moralistic epilogue that bewailed the "Entsittlichung und Verwilderung der Leidenschaften" evidenced by the motivation behind the protagonists' suicide. In this phase of his writing, Keller appears to have favored measured and gentle comportment over wild Romantic whim. However, Paul Heyse deleted this extended epilogue for the version that appeared in the 1870 volume of his *Deutscher Novellenschatz*, choosing to have the story end abruptly with the drowning itself; in other words, with an overt emphasis of precisely that which Keller sought to discourage. Keller subsequently came up with a third solution for the second edition of *Die Leute von Seldwyla* in 1876, allowing the boat to come to rest in a "Ruhebild der Alltagswelt" that remains "unbeschädigt" (Selbmann, *Gottfried Keller*, 64-65). Moreover, the device of the fictional newspaper report creates a distanced perspective on the suicide such that there is no chance for the reader to mistakenly infer the narrator's approval of the events (as had been the case in Heyse's edited version). One might say that in the original 1856 version, Keller seems to express a Stifterian value of *equilibrium* between nature and cultural morality rather than exclusive commitment to one or the other. This didactic message is excised from the 1870 *Deutscher Novellenschatz* edition, but then the final version restores the concepts of "Verwilderung" or "Entsittlichung." though it does away with the moralistic excursus that had originally followed them in 1856. (One cannot help but be put in mind of Keller's own experience of his fiancée's suicidal drowning when reviewing this editorial history). Cf. Erika Swales, *The Poetics of Skepticism: Gottfried Keller and 'Die Leute von Seldwyla'* (Oxford/Providence: Berg, 1994), 86; and Titzmann, "'Natur' vs. 'Kultur,'" 456.

consists precisely in being seen by their community and "recognized" by law, but as something which the community will never be able authentically to see. What they exchange their lives for is the ability to fully and completely invest in an instant of fantasy—in an imitation that can be experienced as true by not being tempered with an implicit expectation of experiencing anything afterwards. This is tied to the fact that the tragic dilemma of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* is one of temporal consciousness, for Sali and Vrenchen's declared inability either to live together in matrimony or to exist apart is due to their awareness of past events as well as future inevitabilities. The sole alternative is therefore to give up diachrony for the sake of synchrony, to experience a moment only once and never again in order to insulate it from a past that might tarnish it and a future that might eclipse it ("Wir sind zusammen gewesen – ob kurz oder lang, das kann uns dann gleich sein").[54]

The temporal logic of this remark is central to the sacrificial logic of Sali and Vrenchen's drowning, and we should consider it carefully. A helpful cue for our analysis can be taken from Augustine's theory of subjective or "distended" time. This concept of *distentio* famously presents our consciousness as something split in two directions, reaching simultaneously into the memory of things past and into the expectation of things to come. However, Augustine notices that he cannot hold onto the present instant as a distinct phenomenon; and yet the present instant surely exists, for time as such is made up of an infinite sequence of "presents" which he is only able to experience as a bifurcation of the past and the future. Where, then, can the present instant be said to take place, given that it always evades our psyche's grip?

[54] This falls between two long-established critical explications of the suicide. On the one hand, it has been described as a retreat to inward fantasy that represents a beatified "Diesseits des Gefühls, das die Wirklichkeit sprengt und den Tod in sich aufnimmt" (Kaiser, *Das gedichtete Leben*, 305), and, on the other, as a decidedly atheist, Feuerbachian *Diesseitigkeit* asserting that love and union in the private sphere can *only* occur during life, since there is no such thing as a *Jenseits*. See Hanspeter Gsell, *Einsamkeit, Idyll und Utopie*, 37-44; Edith A. Runge, "Ein kleiner Blick in die künstlerische Verwandlung," ibid.; and Schrimpf, "Das Poetische sucht das Reale," 161-162.

According to Augustine, the locus of the present *Augenblick* is the *attentio*, a "threshold" in our consciousness positioned between expectation and memory, which Andrea Nightingale describes as "a passive point of transit—it marks the present moment where expected future events move into memories of the past."[55] But where is *attentio* itself rooted, if it cannot be perceived by us in itself, but is nevertheless central to our perception of temporality per se? Nightingale's solution to this paradox is elegantly simple: we cannot perceive the present instant of *attentio*'s operation because this operation is grounded not in our minds, but in our bodies.

This notion of an "embodied" rather than a purely psychic present is made most clear in the analogy which Augustine himself chooses to illustrate *distentio*, namely the act of reciting a hymn (specifically, St. Ambrose's *Deus Creator Omnium*):

> The life of this act of mine is stretched two ways, into my memory because of the words I have already said and into my expectation because of those which I am about to say. But my attention [*attentio*] is on what is present: by that [i.e., *attentionem meam*] the future is transferred to become the past.[56]

As Augustine begins to sing, his expectation reaches into his memory to find the known words in preparation for reciting them anew. Yet as soon as the words are sung, they have already become part of his memory again; the present instant of articulation is either expected or recalled, but can never be grasped in the moment as it takes place. The *attentio* therefore constitutes the *Augenblick*, grounded in the *bodily* present of natural diachrony (here, in the human voice as it sings).[57] However, this *Augenblick* of embodied *attentio* cannot be experienced consciously because it is the very fulcrum against which *distentio* splits our consciousness in order to stretch it apart in the opposite directions of memory and expectation.

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[55] Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 89.
[56] Augustine, *Confessions*, 243; *Confessiones. Bibliotheca Sanctorum Patrum et Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Theologiae et christianarum Litterarum cultoribus accommodata.* Series VI, Vol. 2, ed. Felice Ramorino (Rome: Bibliotheca Ss. Patrum, 1909), 341 [11.xxviii.38].
[57] Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature*, 92.

How might Augustine's account of *distentio* help us to better understand Sali and Vrenchen's drowning as a sacrificial exchange of life—i.e., of diachrony—for the *Augenblick*? Keller's stark imagery of intertwined bodies slipping into water certainly underscores a spatial and particularly bodily understanding of "the instant" which they wish to preserve from expectation and memory. Comparatively, for Augustine, to be human is to exist according to the two frameworks of temporal experience we examined above: the linear flow of natural time (i.e., the "bodily present") and the *distentio* of our minds between the past and the future. However, Augustine claims that in the afterlife we will receive our bodies and selves back, but without being subject to the embodiment that had characterized our mortal lives; "leaving behind the old days," we will be "gathered to follow the One, 'forgetting the past' and moving not towards those future things which are transitory but to 'the things which are before' me, not stretched out in distraction [*distentus*] but extended in reach [*extentus*]."[58] Augustine suggests that with a body that is immortal and a mind that is not distended between past and future, our temporal experience on earth will be replaced with "the things that are before ['*in ea quae ante sunt*']." But what are these "things," and what is "before" meant to designate? As Nightingale suggests, by this "Augustine is referring to a time before time existed. He longs to forget the past and transcend *all* temporal befores. He looks forward to an escape from time—to the eternity that is before time. […] What is "before" time is the eternity of God."[59] The mode of this longing for an eternity prior to time is articulated in terms of *extension*; of reaching towards the (future) eternal present and away from our (present) temporal embodiment—in short, it is articulated in terms of being extended rather than distended [*non distentus, sed 'extentus'*].

[58] Augustine (2008), 244; (1909), 342 [11.xxix.39].
[59] Nightingale 97.

This, however, is the point at which the logic behind Sali and Vrenchen's drowning diverges sharply from that of Augustine's eschatological hope: while Augustine aims precisely to extend "upwards and outwards" from the human body's anchorage within the here and now and the mind's imbrication within *distentio* in order to become "gathered" into an eternity of the divine, Sali and Vrenchen wish to extend "inwards" into an unending *attentio*. Put another way, they desire not the "resurrective" eternity of a heavenly *Jenseits*, but the "embodied" atemporality of an eternally preserved *Augenblick*. In this regard, a basic but salient aspect of the drowning is the image of their bodies' concrete localization within the underwater space—one which stands in counterpoint to any possible image of distention in linear time.

This commitment to extension "inwards" in the present rather than "upwards and outwards" into eternity is further deepened by a final distinctive aspect of the drowning that sets it apart from the burial: namely, the issue of sacrificial intention. Though the essential operation is still a removal of the "ritual content" from view, as in the burial, the ends to which this is carried out are certainly more ambiguous than was the case in the empty field at the beginning of the story. Before Sali and Vrenchen climb aboard the hay ship, Vrenchen asks "Was willst du tun? Wollen wir den Bauern ihr Heuschiff stehlen zu guter Letzt?" (157). Sali's reply is blunt and full of implication: "Sie werden…ihr Eigentum unten wieder finden, wo es ja doch hin soll, und werden nicht wissen, was damit geschehen ist" (ibid.). This prediction is duly fulfilled, for after the lovers' bodies slip into the frigid currents, the ship comes to rest near a bridge and, as we are told in the final paragraph, eventually drifts back to town and makes land "ohne Schiffleute." Similarly, the drowned bodies are later discovered "unterhalb der Stadt" (158-159), thus aligning Sali and Vrenchen with the vessel as "Eigentum" of the community that ultimately does return from the *flumen publicum*.

Sali's suggestive juxtaposition of his and Vrenchen's imminent drowning with the notion of property invites, by way of conclusion, a consideration of how water, extra-peripherality, and sacrifice stand in relation to community, visibility, and orders of law. With respect to the symbolism of seeing, there is a clear link between the burial and the drowning as operations that remove a specific object from public view, but this very similarity also reveals a crucial point of distinction. Whereas the burial of the doll seemed to correspond with an urge to eliminate the imitative product of the ritual, the drowning ultimately results in a darkly ironic realization of Sali and Vrenchen's original wish to be seen insofar as it re-inscribes them into the existing order. The differing status of visibility in both acts is in tune with these differing patterns of objective and effect: the buried doll can no longer be seen, while the drowned protagonists initially disappear from view on the outer edges of the community, but ultimately come back to the surface and are found.

Drowning thus underwrites Sali and Vrenchen's exit into the "offstage" domain of ritual and their return to the visible "stage" of society and its paradigms, though not in their originally desired form of a properly married young couple. Instead, they are preserved within the bourgeois, communal imaginary as a transmutation of this fantasy by being described in the newspaper reports of the event as celebrants of a "verzweifelte und gottverlassene Hochzeit" (159). The drowning, as opposed to the burial, therefore bespeaks a tacit expectation to re-emerge into view, eventually.

Conclusion – *Augenblick*, "*aqua et igni*"

It need not be emphasized that the central thematic elements of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* that we have been investigating—sacrifice, law, imitation, and recognition—are ancient ones. However, before summarizing the central observations that have emerged in this chapter, it is worth drawing attention to an interesting point of comparison.

In his voluminous *New Science* (1725), Giambattista Vico sets about excavating the elemental institutions of human societies, emphasizing religion and ritual in particular as foundational for the process of humanity's evolutionary march out of its primitive, "beastly" state.[60] More particularly, and with an eye to the specific motifs that have intertwined and recurred throughout Keller's novella, it is significant that Vico assigns primary importance to sacrifice. In his account, sacrificial practices first arose in connection with divination, which he identifies as one of the most primordial religious impulses that preceded formalized institutions. Of the latter, he names the rites of marriage and burial as the most fundamental, for these formed the basis for communities that were further established through the cultivation and division of land. In one passage that is especially noteworthy in light of this chapter's focus, we learn that "the ancient Romans celebrated nuptials *aqua et igni* ['with water and fire'], because it was understood that by divine counsel these two common things (and, before fire even, perennial water as a thing more necessary to life) had led men to live in society."[61] Laws and jurisprudence in turn emerged within the "grounded" community as extensions and codifications of these originary, ritual forms of social existence and experience.

One immediately recognizes in Vico's anthropological system the key aspects of Keller's narrative that have been a focus of this chapter's attention: viz., sacrifice and rituality, as well as the broader categories of law associated with land ownership and various designations of individual membership within society, particularly marriage. In the beginning of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, transgressions against law are masked by simulations of lawful order, as exemplified by the comportment of Manz and Marti as they slowly and synchronously swerve their plows into the middle field, each recognizing the other's complicity even as "keiner schien es zu sehen." In the second half of the

[60] Vico, *The New Science (Third Edition of 1744)*, trans. Thomas Bergin and Max Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 7-10 [§8-15].
[61] Ibid., 8 (§11).

story, by contrast, Sali and Vrenchen's transgressions consist of their purposeful imitations of lawfulness itself. Unlike the paradigms described by Vico or Girard, here sacrifice succeeds rather than precedes the orders of law; indeed, the objects of sacrifice in both the burial and the drowning are variant recognitions of transgression. Nonetheless, there are important distinctions to be made between the circumstances surrounding these recognitions, the nature of the transgressions that are recognized, as well as the intent of the rituals that follow.

In the burial scene, Sali and Vrenchen's abuse of the doll is marked by repetition—and more specifically imitation—of an initial violent act (i.e., Sali abruptly hurling the stone at the doll). However, this violence first occurs following Vrenchen's playful imitations of lawful and quotidian behavior. The sacrificial climax of the children's mutilation and Bacchic dismemberment of the doll—which itself consists of repetitions of specific actions—is a twofold burial: first of a fly inside the doll, and then, following a moment of mutual recognition between Sali and Vrenchen and their shared feeling of "menschliche Grausamkeit," of the doll in the earth. The primary motivation behind this sacrificial climax, it was suggested, was the symbolic attempt to eliminate the *Augenblick* of recognition from view and consciousness.

The drowning, as we have seen, comes at the end of a series of imitations of lawfulness (i.e., civil matrimony) that culminate in two enactments of a wedding ritual—the first a parodic simulation in the company of *Heimatlosen*, and the second an earnest, but nevertheless equally unsanctioned, exchange of rings and vows on the banks of the river. The drowning, as the sacrificial climax of this rite, corresponds with the relinquishment of Sali and Vrenchen's original wish for a state of lawful union that is recognized in and by the community, the very wish that had first motivated their imitations of its actualization during their final day together. In contrast to the burial,

then, the sacrificial nature of the drowning consists not in symbolically negating recognized guilt, but instead in offering up the desire *for* recognition by the collective.

Thus, on a structural level, what Sali and Vrenchen sacrifice is a particular mode of temporal experience in exchange for a different one; that is, they give up the hope of an impossible future event of communal recognition and its effects in order to live out a singular recognition between themselves.[62] It is an *Augenblick* that, somewhat like Kierkegaard's etymologically related notion of *Øieblikket*, is both an impermanent moment in empirical time and a transcendent present of human experience.[63] By drowning themselves immediately afterwards, Sali and Vrenchen seal the impossibility of ever remembering this moment from a future, retrospective vantage point in time. Nor can they proleptically look forward from this singular moment of private recognition of each other as husband and wife in even hypothetical anticipation of a reciprocal recognition of this status from the side of the community. One could therefore suggest that the fundamental insight of Keller's outwardly simple tale does not rest in a lyrical portrait of star-crossed love, nor in a critique of socio-economic ideology. Rather, it rests in the thought that sacrifice, insofar as it is essentially a rite of recognition, is at heart the offering in and of time.

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Among the few surviving documents in which Keller refers to his fiancée's suicidal drowning is a two-line letter that he wrote to her uncle, in whose house he had

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[62] Cf. Hans Tietgens, *Möglichkeit einer Zeitgestalt-Untersuchung, dargestellt an Gottfried Kellers 'Leuten von Seldwyla'* (Ph.D diss., Universität Bonn, 1949), 39, 54.

[63] Sue Zemka distinguishes Kierkegaard's concept of *Øieblikket* from the notion of *Augenblick* in German aesthetic and philosophical thought (specifically that of Lessing) as follows: "Lessing's *Augenblick* occurs in organic time, whereas Kierkegaard's *Øieblikket* is an organic instant with a supernatural double; the sensual present is a 'parody' of the eternal present." Zemka, *Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 45. Cf. Christopher A. P. Nelson, "The Eye-Glance: on the Significance of *Øieblikket* as a Concept, a Title, and a Figurative Expression," in *"The Moment" and Late Writings. International Kierkegaard Commentary* Vol. 23, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 11-43.

first met her that very winter. The second (and final) line of the note reads: "Die Tote hat mich einen Augenblick angesehen und ist dann ihren einsamen Weg weiter gegangen, ohne zu wissen, an was sie vorüberging."[64] One cannot help but ruminate on the fact that ten years before writing these words, Keller had chosen to portray a drowning not as incomprehensible or tragic, but as sacrificial, rooting it in the offering up of desire for a future form of life in exchange for a fleeting reflection of it in the present instant. Within a single movement, Sali and Vrenchen immolate their wish for a moment that might ramify into the future and therefore also be woven into their memory. In place of this wish, they offer each other the moment itself; a both rapturous and resigned "blink of an eye" that is wholly lived, and then given quietly to the water.

[64] Letter to Karl Gottlieb Wegmann (July 28th, 1866), in *Gesammelte Briefe* Bd. 4, ed. Carl Helbling (Bern: Benteli, 1954), 128. Cited by Werner Staub, "Christina Luise Scheidegger (1843-1866): Die Braut von Gottfried Keller," *Jahrbuch des Oberaargaus* 25 (1982): 176. The other known document by Keller that alludes to Scheidegger's drowning is an untitled memorial poem, dated 8 August 1866. The lines address a "süße Tote, / […] Die in der Morgenfrüh' in leisen Schuhen / die Ruh' gesucht und mir die Unruh' gab, / […] Entschwundenes Gut, O Herz voll seltner Güte, / Steh auf und schüttle nur dein nasses Haar! / […]" (ln. 2, 5-6, 9-10).

Chapter 3

Sündfluten: Inheritance, Atonement, and Trace in the Late Work of Theodor Storm

[…] Es nehmet aber
Und gibt Gedächtnis die See,
Und die Lieb' auch heftet fleißig die Augen,
Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter.
—Friedrich Hölderlin[1]

At one time the land and fields of North Frisia, Theodor Storm's home for nearly his entire life, lay beneath the sea. Over a period of centuries, the water had been gradually pushed back, the shoreline extended ever further out, until the sand could be cultivated into fertile marshland.[2] From a young age, Storm seemed to share in a local consciousness of living on stolen ground, with the sea always eager (yet patient) to reclaim what had been taken from it. Amongst the North Frisian legends and folklore that Storm and two university friends (brothers Tycho and Theodor Mommsen) recorded and compiled in the early 1840s, we read at one point that "wo einmal Wasser gewesen ist, kann auch wieder Wasser kommen, ist ein alter Glaube."[3] This staid awareness of the past's ability to wash onto the present like water upon inhabited land is also implicit throughout Storm's writing; however, it is most palpable in his later novellas (1872-1888), in which the salience of memory is complemented by a ubiquity of drowning scenes. This chapter explores how and why the two may be linked.

To this end, I will focus upon three exemplary texts from Storm's late period, *Aquis Submersus* (1876) *Ein Doppelgänger* (1887), and *Der Schimmelreiter* (1888), though I will also make briefer reference to other important works from this timeframe.[4] Scholars

[1] Ln. 56-59, "Andenken" (1803).
[2] David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape and the Making of Modern Germany* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 116-124.
[3] "Woher die großen Fluthen kommen," in *Märchen und Lieder der Herzogthümer Schleswig, Holstein und Lauenburg*, ed. Karl Müllenhoff (Kiel: Schwersche Buchhandlung, 1845), 129.
[4] All citations refer to the following edition of the selected texts: Theodor Storm, *Sämtliche Werke in vier Bänden*, ed. Karl Ernst Laage and Dieter Lohmeier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987-1988).

have long noted the central role of memory in Storm's poetics, and I shall suggest this to be the key to interpreting the symbolism of water and drowning that pervades his narrative landscapes. Ultimately, I argue that drowning occurs so frequently in these stories because of what water conveys for Storm: namely, a particular kind of threshold inherent to memory. The symbolically rich opposition between water's surface and its depths, by now quite familiar to us from other works of German Realism, is employed in Storm's writing in order to portray remembrance as a constant oscillation between retrieval and loss.

A second important aspect of memory in this late period of Storm's work is its enmeshment with ethics, and more specifically with the question, faced by his characters time and again, of how one will be remembered, as well as with the question of how one should remember others. In the novellas examined below, this ethical aspect of memory is bound up with the theme of desire to atone for past transgressions, and this in turn is bound up with the concept of sacrifice. As we shall see with the help of reference to thinkers such as Foucault and Kierkegaard, the various acts of sacrifice that take place either react to an infraction against some form of law or themselves constitute such an infraction.

In each of these stories, memory depends upon a material trace of some kind to which it can attach itself, but it also seems that the trace is produced by memory in the first place.[5] This ambiguous boundary between being here and being gone is the common thread joining the imagery of drowning with the themes of memory and penitence. After all, Storm's late fiction is filled with characters who drown and characters who negotiate their own memories, but also with characters who wonder about the implications of being here *again* in the form of another person's memory.

[5] Here it is necessary to acknowledge the rich epistemology and phenomenology of memory, absence, image, and trace, an authoritative discussion of which can be found in Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5-44; 418-443.

Water is always the site where the contingency of human action confronts the inexorability of time; yet water, like memory, is simultaneously ever-present and unstill.[6] Consequently, the various chronicles of law, sacrifice, and penitence that we encounter in these narratives are ones that were not merely entrusted to a narrator's memory, but instead inscribed in order to leave a trace; that were made somehow legible, and so became still.

I.

In many ways, Storm's final phase of writing can be seen as an organic extension out of a theme that had appeared in much of his work up to the 1870s. As in Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, this theme concerns the tension between the desire to attain an idealized existence within bourgeois society and the many obstacles to realizing this desire that economic instability presents. Novellas such as *Auf dem Staatshof* (1859), *Auf der Universität* (1863), and *Draußen im Heidedorf* (1872) introduce two developments that become central components of Storm's later works: on the one hand, the temporal characteristics of inheritance and debt gradually become associated with different forms of law, and on the other hand, the narratives begin increasingly to center upon the tension between these forms of law and the individuals who must navigate them.

Auf dem Staatshof is one of the earliest examples of this plot type; here the primary concern is the necessity of marriage for securing a familial legacy and estate. Notably, the instances of drowning that occur Storm's novellas between 1860 and 1870 are largely

[6] Hildegard Lorenz has perceived several tropological resonances of water in Storm's work that will be helpful to keep in mind throughout this chapter. Foremost among these is death, which Storm often depicts as an entry into a realm devoid of the negations, absences, and gaps that pervade the realm of human experience. Lorenz elaborates that "Wasser ist aufgrund seiner physikalischen Eigenschaften unendlich ausdehnbar und minimal begrenzbar; es ist daher geeignet auf der Textur-Ebene die Realisation von unbestimmten Außenräumen und eng begrenzten Innenräumen zu übernehmen, die beide 'Tod' abbilden können." Most crucially for our purposes, Lorenz also notes Storm's frequent omission of death scenes from the narrative stage, especially drownings, which crystallize the kind of death "bei denen dieses Sterbemoment von sich aus in einen anderen Raum verlagert ist." Lorenz, *Varianz und Invarianz: Theodor Storms Erzählungen. Figurenkonstellationen und Handlungsmuster* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1985), here 103, 109, 201.

suicides that entail a desperate reaction on the part of characters who have violated the law or otherwise feel crushed beneath its strictures. Some critics have suggested that in this phase of Storm's work, portrayals of drowning as a "return to nature" ultimately point to the lack of recourse for characters (often women) who have been ostracized by their community, with death by water on the periphery of the town figuring as a symbolically rich and culturally established means of escape.[7]

In *Auf der Universität*, too, we find the theme of failure to realize an ideal existence in society, though Storm more explicitly integrates Ophelian tropes into this tale about the hidden torment of a young woman who is beset by external societal constraints and expectations, and eventually internalizes them. As a consequence of this, her drowning seems simultaneously to negate and legitimate these constraints and expectations insofar as it renounces the prospect of life in the social order, yet nonetheless signals a desperate reaction to the unattainability of this very order (Keller's novella again comes to mind here).[8] In light of water's classical associations of ambivalence and flux, the drowning scenes in novellas such as *Auf dem Staatshof* and *Auf der Universität* can be read as spatial representations of this zone in which the negation and legitimation of societal desiderata coalesce.

Draußen im Heidedorf carries this theme forward, although the dynamics are altered slightly. The story revolves around the disappearance of a young man from his remote community on the moor, and we learn of his obsession with a mysterious newcomer to the village, on whom he lavished gifts paid for by the dowry of a neighboring farmer's daughter he has recently married. It is eventually discovered that on the night of his disappearance he had attempted to convince the young woman to leave with him, and

[7] Cf. David A. Jackson, *Theodor Storm: The Life and Works of a Democratic Humanitarian* (New York: Berg, 1992), 115; and Malte Stein, *"Sein Geliebtestes zu töten": Literaturpsychologische Studien zum Geschlechter- und Generationskonflikt im erzählerischen Werk Theodor Storms* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2006), 58-59.
[8] Karin Tebben, "'Wo keine Göttinnen sind, da walten Gespenster': Dämoninnen und Philister im Werk Theodor Storms," *The Germanic Review* 79.1 (2004): 20.

that upon her refusal he had pulled out gold earned from selling his horses and thrown it into a nearby well before vanishing into the night. This literal "liquidation" of capital turns out to have foreshadowed his own end, for his drowned remains are soon found in the marshes. In a parallel process, the gold is retrieved from the well, and the young woman leaves the village without a trace. The narrator notes that she is said to have eventually settled in "ich weiß nicht welche große Stadt […] und dort in der Menschenflut verschollen sein."[9] The novella therefore ends with a tripartite metaphor: the image of money being submerged in the well, followed by that of the man drowning out of despair over his futile passion and self-wrought financial ruin, are both juxtaposed with the woman's "submergence" in the tides of mass society.

While the pathos of an individual's relation to the community is a core theme of Storm's fiction—and indeed of German Realism as a whole—it is by no means particular to the nineteenth-century cultural imaginary. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Giambattista Vico opined in his *New Science* (1744) that even before formal domains of law were first established, there existed an innate collective yearning for one's place in both the landscape and the family unit to be extended forward in time. Consequently, the three foundational institutions of human culture—matrimony, religion, and burial of the dead—were developed due to their capacity to establish "plots" in the earth and in communal memory that might perdure, outlasting their inhabitants in order to be inherited and tended to by subsequent generations.[10] In this way, the underlying impetus of marriage, like burial and ceremonial worship of the divine, mirrors that of law per se. After all, Vico suggests, the original root of human "laws" (*leges*) derives above all from a basic human will to gather (*legere*) and bind (*ligare*), to cull particular elements from a

[9] Storm, *Sämtliche Werke* (hereafter *SW*) Bd. 2, 101.
[10] Vico, *The New Science (Third Edition of 1744)*, trans. Thomas Bergin and Max Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 97 (§333).

greater, chaotic whole such that they can be sought and found in a single place, and with a unity of purpose, through time.[11]

It is this central element of inheritance identified by Vico that informs law's dialectical relation to penitence in Storm's work, for they both center upon the activity of memory, just from opposite directions: while law in a sense extends out of the past and into the present, atonement involves a reaching back into the past from out of the present. Even more specifically, though, they both involve an essential investment in *trace*, which for Storm is necessary for memory in the first place. And, as we shall soon see, in his late works the most legible traces are those left by acts of sacrifice.

II.

Sema and Submergence – *Aquis Submersus*

Often regarded as the text that marks the beginning of Storm's late period, *Aquis Submersus* (1876) is typically read from two angles. One major strain of scholarship has attended to issues of guilt, fate, and the tragic as they operate within the innermost narrative frame,[12] while another has examined how the outer frame thematizes art and memory as defenses against the encroachment of time, mortality, and forgetting.[13] Although any reading of *Aquis Submersus* will necessarily happen upon these well-trod

[11] Ibid., 78 (§240).
[12] W. A. Coupe, "Zur Frage der Schuld in *Aquis Submersus*," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 24 (1975): 57-72; Roy C. Cowen, "Theodor Storm: 'Aquis Submersus,'" in *Der Poetische Realismus: Kommentar zu einer Epoche* (München: Winkler Verlag, 1985), 235-247; David A. Jackson, "Die Überwindung der Schuld in der Novelle *Aquis Submersus*," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 21 (1972): 45-56; W. N. B. Mullan, "Tragic Guilt and the Motivation of the Catastrophe in Storm's *Aquis Submersus*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 18.3 (1982): 225-246; and John Pizer, "Guilt, Memory, and the Motif of the Double in Storm's *Aquis Submersus* and *Ein Doppelgänger*," *The German Quarterly* 65 (1992): 177-191.
[13] Clifford A. Bernd, *Theodor Storm's Craft of Fiction: the Torment of a Narrator* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 12-53; Heinrich Detering, "Storm oder die Wiederkehr der Toten: zur Rahmenerzählung von 'Aquis Submersus,'" in *Herkunftsorte: Literarische Verwandlungen im Werk Storms, Hebbels, Groths, Thomas und Heinrich Manns* (Heide: Boyens Verlag, 2001), 106-147, and "*Aquis Submersus*: Schattenbeschwörung und Zeitkritik," in *Interpretationen: Theodor Storm. Novellen*, ed. Christoph Deupmann (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2008), 68-87; Leonard L. Duroche, "Like and Look Alike: Symmetry and Irony in Theodor Storm's *Aquis Submersus*," *Seminar* 7 (1971): 1-13; Gunter H. Hertling, *Theodor Storms "Meisterschuß" 'Aquis Submersus': der Künstler zwischen Determiniertheit und Selbstvollendung* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995); and Robert C. Holub, "Realism and Recollection: the Commemoration of Art and the Aesthetics of Abnegation in *Aquis Submersus*," *Colloquia Germanica* 18.2 (1985): 120-139.

paths, I nevertheless hope to cover new ground by deepening our understanding of how drowning symbolism functions in the text—not merely as its thematic centerpiece, but as a determining component of its narrative logic and structure. First, we will see how law is associated with the temporality of inheritance insofar as its different manifestations take the form of generational atavism and supernatural revenance, both of which involve a resurgent "force" from the past that acts upon the present. Then, we will observe how the climactic scene—a drowning—forms the root of the plot's second temporal underpinning: penitent retrospection. Ultimately, I will suggest that the drowning takes place as a narrative *Augenblick* poised between the "inheritant" force of law and the retrospective activity of penitence, a schema that becomes intrinsic to the function of sacrifice in Storm's late work overall.

The first narrative frame wastes little time in bringing us to the site of the novella's central, titular event. The narrator guides us through his memories of childhood, conjuring the setting of a palace garden and a dried out fishpond near an embankment, from which one can see a distant church tower rising up from the otherwise uninterrupted horizontality of the heath. He then moves us on towards the church itself, and recollects spending a great deal of time as a boy playing with the pastor's son in the rectory and adjoining garden, noting how they had enjoyed free reign over most of the grounds, save for one place: "Nur die Silberpappel, der einzig hohe und also auch einzig verlockende Baum des Dorfes […] war gleich dem Apfelbaum des Paradieses uns verboten."[14] This Edenic space's intimations of transgression are enhanced by the narrator's reference to having stolen fruit from the pastor's orchard on the opposite side of "einer tiefen und, wie ich jetzt meine, nicht weniger als jene Pappel

[14] *SW* Bd. 2., 379.

gefährlichen Wassergrube," thus locating what the reader later learns to be a site of drowning within a network of Biblical and Augustinian topoi of temptation (ibid.).[15]

The narrator then turns to the primary objects of his childhood fixation inside the church itself, which contains a number of images of the stations of the Cross and other scenes surrounding the crucifixion. Ironically, however, it is not in the chancel that the narrator is filled with emotion and wonder, but instead in the nave, before the secular portrait of an anonymous, lifeless boy:

> Unter all diesen seltsamen oder wohl gar unheimlichen Dingen hing im Schiff der Kirche das unschuldige Bildnis eines toten Kindes, eines schönen, etwa fünfjährigen Knaben, der, auf einem mit Spitzen besetzten Kissen ruhend, eine weiße Wasserlilie in seiner kleinen, bleichen Hand hielt. Aus dem zarten Antlitz sprach neben dem Grauen des Todes, wie hülfeflehend, noch eine letzte holde Spur des Lebens; ein unwiderstehliches Mitleid befiel mich, wenn ich vor diesem Bilde stand.
> Aber es hing nicht allein hier; dicht daneben [war] ein finsterer schwarzbärtiger Mann in Priesterkragen [...] Mein Freund sagte mir, es sei der Vater jenes schönen Knaben; dieser selbst, so gehe noch heute die Sage, solle einst in der Wassergrube unserer Priesterkoppel seinen Tod gefunden haben. (381)

The noteworthy juxtaposition between the sacramental and secular images in the church invites us to compare them, most immediately in terms of their shared themes of innocence and death. Numerous critics have pointed out how this dual association is conveyed in the portrait by the symbolism of the white water lily, and the narrator himself recalls "das unschuldige Bildnis" in which he seemed to detect the smallest flutter of unexpired life that in turn provoked his strong emotional response to it. This "unwiderstehliches Mitleid" seems to be less for the actual death of the boy than for the young body's palpable contingency; indeed, the faint hint of life perceptible just beneath its form underscores the fact that things might have been otherwise.

Storm is believed to have based this fictional portrait upon an actual painting that he saw in the parish church of Drelsdorf some years prior to 1876.[16] The image in

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[15] Cf. Thomas A. Kamla, "Transitoriness and Christian Transcendence in Storm's *Aquis Submersus,*" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 39.1 (2003): 27-52.

[16] Storm describes the impression that the portrait made upon him in a letter to Paul Heyse from 20 June, 1876: "Vor ein paar Jahren sah ich bei einem Besuche…in dem 2 Meilen von [Husum] liegenden nordfriesischen Dorfe Drelsdorf…in der alten Kirche die schlecht gemalten Bilder einer alten dortigen

question constitutes part of the seventeenth-century Bonnix family epitaph, and shows the young son Heinrich, set against an indistinct, somber background and glancing pointedly out at the viewer with a red thistle suspended between his thumb and forefinger (Figures 1 and 2).[17] If one contrasts the Drelsdorf portrait with the narrator's description of the painting in *Aquis Submersus*, it is almost as though the visage of Heinrich Bonnix, still alive in the Drelsdorf portrait, stirs beneath the lifeless one of the unnamed boy in *Aquis Submersus* and lends it the "letzte holde Spur des Lebens" to which the narrator reacts.

The narrator remembers how on one such visit to the church as a young man, he discovered a detail in the portrait that had hitherto escaped his notice: in the lower corner, four letters are inscribed in red paint: "C.P.A.S." Upon asking the pastor what they mean, the narrator is told that according to local legend, the latter two letters stand for "aquis submersus," but that the significance of the first two are unknown. As we gradually learn, both the image and the inscription in the painting refer to an event of drowning, and by doing so indirectly rather than explicitly, they also convey a key significance of drowning symbolism in Storm's late work: like the division between surface and depths, both the image and the inscription imply that the relationship

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Predigerfamilie. Der eine Knabe war noch einmal als Leiche gemalt, ob mit einer und welcher Blume, entsinne ich mich nicht. Unter diesem Totenbilde standen, oder stehen noch, die merkwürdigen, harten Worte: 'Incuria servi aquis submersus.' Hinter dem Pastorate war noch eine Koppel mit einer Wassergrube, wahrscheinlich hatte der Knecht den Knaben dort ertrinken lassen. Dies Bild ist mir immer von neuem nachgegangen." In *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Paul Heyse und Theodor Storm* Bd. 1, ed. Georg Plotke (München: J. F. Lehmann, 1917), 125-126. Cited by Karl Friedrich Boll, "Das Bonnixsche Epitaph in Drelsdorf und die Kirchenbilder in Theodor Storms Erzählung *Aquis Submersus*," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 14 (1965): 28.

[17] While the exact orientation of the painting is not specified in the text, it is nevertheless interesting to consider the site in which its real-life source of inspiration is located. The Bonnix Epitaph hangs on the north wall of the Drelsdorf church's nave, which places it squarely within the spatial semantics of standard church architecture: one always enters from the west—in this case from the direction of the sea—and is faced at the opposite, eastern end by the images and liturgical objects surrounding the sanctuary and altar. The fact that the portrait hangs on the north wall, at approximately the midpoint of the nave, does not merely imply its meaningful position squarely within the church's architectural symbolism (i.e., between the earthly sphere beyond the doors and the soteriological sphere within the chancel). Given that the northern plot of Western European churchyards was traditionally reserved for the graves of those regarded as sinners (thieves, adulterers, etc.), the configuration of the portraits implicitly connotes a penitential context. Cf. Ernst Sauermann, ed., "Drelsdorf," in *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Provinz Schleswig-Holstein. Kreis Husum* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1939), 76.

between signs and their referents relies upon memory as much as memory relies upon signs. As such, they also convey the fragility of this relationship, for the possibility of misinterpreting signs is mirrored by the uncertainty of remembering properly, or at all. The frame narrative has in fact already introduced a connection between water and memory, for the narrator began his account at a dried up fishpond before proceeding north to the pond outside the rectory where the boy in the painting is rumored to have drowned. The physical site of the water in the landscape is here linked with the image of the mysterious painted letters as things to which meaning and context must be assigned at a later point in time by means of remembering. This correlation is made clearer as the narrator's account continues.

Fig. 1: Bonnix Family Epitaph (1656/1657), Ev.-luth. Kirche Drelsdorf

Fig 2: Heinrich Bonnix (detail), Ev.-luth. Kirche Drelsdorf

Fig 3: Heinrich Bonnix (partial view), Ev.-luth. Kirche Drelsdorf[18]

He recalls standing before the portrait with the pastor and attempting to infer the first half of the inscription. The pastor notes that "casu periculoso" had been suggested as a possibility, but the narrator's instinct points in a different direction:

> […] "es könnte auch wohl 'Culpa' heißen?"
> "Culpa?" wiederholte der Pastor. "Durch Schuld? – Aber durch wessen Schuld?"
> Da trat das finstere Bild des alten Predigers mir vor die Seele, und ohne viel Besinnen rief ich: "Warum nicht: 'Culpa Patris?'" (383)

The pastor swiftly rejects this interpretation, pointing out that, were the father indeed responsible, he hardly would have wanted this fact to be immortalized alongside his own likeness. The narrator, at a loss once again, gives up. However, his uncanny intuition for the hidden significance of the inscription is vindicated several years later while visiting relatives in the nearby village. In an upstairs room he discovers another painting that

> stellte einen älteren, ernst und milde blickenden Mann dar […] aber der Maler hatte ihm einen blassen Knaben in den Arm gelegt, der in seiner kleinen schlaff herabhängenden Hand eine weiße Wasserlilie hielt; – und diesen Knaben kannte ich ja längst. Auch hier war es wohl der Tod, der ihm die Augen zugedrückt hatte. (385)

[18] The full inscription in the lower portion of the canvas reads: "*Henricus Bonnix aquis incuria servi submersus obyt Ao 1656 7 May Aetatis 10*" ["Heinrich Bonnix, drowned due to the carelessness of a servant. Died on 7 May in the year 1656, aged 10"] (Translation mine). Storm, perhaps relying upon memory, partially misquotes this *subscriptio* in his 1876 letter to Heyse.

As had been the case with the first painting of the child, and like the pond he is said to have drowned in, here too the images correspond with a meaning that remains always just out of the narrator's reach.

Both of the fictional Baroque portraits, which share a single referent, somehow "implant" a significance into the mind of the narrator that is not explicitly communicated by the content of the image. In this respect, they fulfill a central tenet of post-Reformation image making;[19] More importantly, though, their semantic and narrative functions effectively mirror those of the rectory's pond from the beginning of the frame narration. Each of these objects first emerges in the text as a signifier devoid of a signified; it is only through the course of the narrative that their secret meanings can be retroactively ascribed to them.[20] The paintings' connection to the child's drowning thus extends beyond the context of the images themselves, for drowning as such deftly symbolizes the contingency of signs: when something disappears from the world above into the depths below, it reaffirms the impossibility of leaving any trace on water.[21] To be "*aquis submersus*" is necessarily to be memorialized and thereby remembered in a different place and through a different medium than the water (in contrast to the scenario of being

[19] Joseph Leo Koerner's study of visual art produced by Protestant Reformers demonstrates painting's imbrication with polemic in this period, especially against what was viewed as a Catholic fetishization of images and "signs" in lieu of devotion to their intended message. This Lutheran critique of images' and idols' abject "thingliness" became most radical during the iconoclasm frenzy: "Reified and emptied, the image was treated like the lowliest of things." According to Koerner, Reformed painters hit upon a solution by developing a pictorial "scenography" where images became a subordinate outgrowth of the *logos* such that they, like Scripture, might implant a "true image" of their meaning into the pious heart rather than onto the naked eye. Koerner, *Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), here 105, 160-161.

[20] David Dysart argues that the paintings in *Aquis Submersus* emblematize "all the structural aspects of painting [in Storm's work]: the manner of introduction in the initial frame, the element of mystery and commensurate power of attraction, the ability to move the narrative forward, the silent and watchful quality of the painting, the structural vehicle for shifts between frame and inner story, and finally the ability to lend authenticity to the story." Dysart, *The Role of Painting in the Works of Theodor Storm* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 104.

[21] The more influential interpretations of the painting's role in Storm's novella from a semiotic (and occasionally [post]structuralist) angle include Elisabeth Bronfen, "Leichenhafte Bilder – bildhafte Leichen: zu dem Verhältnis von Bild und Referenz in Theodor Storms Novelle *Aquis Submersus*," in *Die Trauben des Zeuxis—Formen künstlerischen Wirklichkeitsaneignung*, ed. Hans Körner et al. (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1990), 305-334; Achim Nuber, "Ein Bilderrätsel: emblematische Struktur und Autoreferentialität in Theodor Storms Erzählung *Aquis Submersus*," *Colloquia Germanica* 26.3 (1993): 227-243; and Claus-Michael Ort, *Zeichen und Zeit: Probleme des literarischen Realismus* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), 53-91, esp. 83-90.

buried in the earth, for instance). It is therefore not so much the painting and its inscription that emblematize the essential semiotic nature of remembrance, but rather the uninscribable water. The portrait in the church and its cryptic inscription are connected to the pond nearby, though not merely because both of them pertain to the same event of drowning. As narrative topoi that are also physical markers of a lost meaning and an extinguished life, both the portrait and the pond can be construed as *signs* in line with the ancient etymology of *sema*, which could also mean "tomb."[22]

This dual sense deepens when the narrator discovers a testament written by the artist responsible for both images. The journal begins in the year 1661 as the painter Johannes (who is also the intradiegetic narrator of the *Binnenerzählung*) is returning to North Frisia after his years of apprenticeship in Amsterdam. Johannes arrives at his destination, only to learn that his beloved patron, Gerhardus, has died. He then encounters Gerhardus' beautiful daughter Katharina, whom Johannes had known as a child and "in dem, wie es sich nachmals fügen mußte, all Glück und Leid und auch all nagende Buße meines Lebens beschlossen sein sollte" (388). The grounds for this "Buße" are first suggested by the fact that Katharina has been promised in marriage to a local man by her bellicose and domineering brother, Wulf. Johannes, who promptly falls in love with her after their years apart, is appointed with painting her engagement portrait.

He sets about his work, and soon develops the habit of spending his breaks in the family gallery, studying the faces of Katharina's forbears in search of her features. He finds these at once in the visages of her parents, but notes the curious fact that they bear no discernible resemblance to her brother. Rather, it is in a portrait from several generations earlier that he recognizes Wulf in the countenance of a sinister old woman:

[22] For a thorough discussion of this dual significance in the Classical context, see Gregory Nagy, "Sêma and Nóesis: The Hero's Tomb and the 'Reading' of Symbols in Homer and Hesiod," in *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 202-222.

> Ein leiser Schauer überfuhr mich vor der so lang schon heimgegangenen Seele; und ich sprach zu mir: "Hier, diese ist's! Wie räthselhafte Wege gehet die Natur! Ein saeculum und drüber rinnt es heimlich wie unter einer Decke im Blute der Geschlechter fort; dann, längst vergessen, taucht es plötzlich wieder auf, den Lebenden zum Unheil. (402)

Crucially, the association of heredity with the rhythms of nature's laws is expressed using the language of submergence and resurfacing. The rather Stifterian image Johannes describes is that of nature's claim to two dialectical movements; one upwards and into the visible realm of physiognomy, lived history, and recognition, and another that dips back down beneath the surface, remaining hidden from sight and knowledge until the process repeats itself. This portrayal of genetic inheritance as a kind of continuous oscillation between surfaces and depths that extends forward through time is then elaborated upon: Katharina explains that the woman in the portrait—known as the *Ahnfrau*—had been the spouse of her father's ancestor over a century before. According to local lore, her daughter had been in love with another man beneath her station, but drowned herself out of despair after the match was forbidden and cursed by the *Ahnfrau*, whose ghost is rumored to haunt the property still.

It is interesting to notice that the narrative quickly moves from considering the natural laws of heredity to the human laws of matriarchal command, and links the two together by the spectral "law" of the curse. The imagery that is drawn upon throughout is that of submergence, first in the conceptualization of nature's dialectical movement between the surface and depths of the "Blut der Geschlechter," and then in the legend of the *Ahnfrau* and her daughter's drowning. There is a central association between imperative and the determination of the family line; i.e., an association between law and inheritance in a broad sense. However, in slight contrast to how this association appeared in *Draußen im Heidedorf*, here we find ourselves not merely in an economic context of inheritance, but also in a natural context of generational progression, and ultimately in a supernatural context of haunting as well.

Much has been written about how the *Ahnfrau*'s atavistic will seems to become an actual, baleful agent in Johannes' and Katharina's love story,[23] but what I wish to emphasize on this point is simply how the logic of inheritance central to the *Ahnfrau*'s interdiction is countered by her child's death in water. This interdiction goes on to take the form of a curse, becoming a "force" from the past that weighs upon the present; the daughter's drowning signals an individual act of decision that moves against her mother's command, and in so doing pushes back against the insistent diachrony of law. Water becomes the topos of law's halted progress, for it not only flouts the content of the command, but also cuts short the forward-march of time intrinsic to it by ending a life (and with it a bloodline). If we recall Johannes' earlier description of the natural order's manifestation within the inherited characteristics of offspring as a "coming to the surface," then the daughter's drowning assumes quite a subtle significance: the act of drowning in this instance not only moves against the *Ahnfrau*'s imperative of obligation to the family line, but also on a figurative level moves against the upward and forward-moving current of nature's "räthselhafte Wege."

Within this short scene, then, the act of drowning stands in opposition to maternal law and natural order as forces of continuation.[24] Crucially, at this point in the text the motif of drowning is tied to the active choice of a free agent (the daughter) to take her own life in reaction to her mother's prohibition. However, the central scene of drowning around which *Aquis Submersus* revolves (i.e., that of the boy in the painting) has

[23] For two recent examples, see Christian Begemann, "Figuren der Wiederkehr: Erinnerung, Tradition, Vererbung und andere Gespenster der Vergangenheit bei Theodor Storm," in *Wirklichkeit und Wahrnehmung: neue Perspektive auf Theodor Storm*, ed. Elisabeth Strowick and Ulrike Vedder (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), 13-37; and Elisabeth Strowick, "'Eine andere Zeit': Storms Rahmentechnik des Zeitsprungs," *Wirklichkeit und Wahrnehmung* (op. cit.), 55-72.

[24] Helga Bleckwenn provides a comparative reading of the drowning scenes in Storm's novella and Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* that emphasizes a similar theme of discontinuation. Bleckwenn argues that the children in both texts represent hope and future possibilities that are foiled. However, while in Goethe's novel there is reference to reconciliation and spiritual closure after the drowning, Storm's tale leaves the protagonist's spiritual situation unresolved. Bleckwenn, "Aquis Submersus: das Motiv des ertrinkenden Kindes in Storms Novelle und in Goethes *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 52 (2003): 75-83.

been designated from the outset as an unwilled event in which paternal guilt rather than filial decision is the principle cause. In the last section of the novella, the temporal opposition between drowning (synchrony) and law (diachrony) will be complemented by the retrospective acts of memorialization and penitence that return to the moment of drowning from later points in time. As we shall observe, these acts are instigated by Johannes' realization that the drowning constitutes a tragic sacrifice for which he himself bears responsibility.

The preceding scene foreshadows how events will unfold, given the fact that Katharina's brother Wulf has forced her into an engagement to a man she does not love, and that she and Johannes harbor feelings for one another. One summer evening during the festival of St. John,[25] Wulf and Johannes have an altercation in the village tavern, and Wulf sets his two hunting dogs upon Johannes, who is forced to flee back to the house. He takes refuge in Katharina's bedroom, narrowly escaping the hounds after she helps him climb through her window. Their long-awaited night of passion at last occurs, and the following morning Johannes sets off for Amsterdam in the hopes of securing a home and livelihood to which he can one day escape with Katharina. When he is finally able to return for her several years later, however, she is nowhere to be found. Johannes soon receives a commission to paint the portrait of a pastor from a nearby village, and so he makes his way north.

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[25] The folk rituals associated with St. John's Eve contain numerous symbolic resonances with Storm's novella that have long attracted scholarly interest. Gerhard Kaiser has offered the richest analysis of these resonances thus far, devoting particular attention to the traditional practice of sacrificial drowning. Kaiser draws a connection between this macabre rite of *Johannisnacht* and the tragic events that transpire after Johannes' and Katharina's illicit affair during the festival, suggesting them to comprise "zwei geistige und ein leibliches Opfer" (413). Kaiser argues that Storm implicitly critiques the Christian framework of consolation, and that water imagery in the novella—especially as represented by Johannes' Biblical namesake and the sacrificial traditions surrounding *Johannisnacht*—does not invoke baptism and rebirth, but instead performs a darkly ironic variation on these themes whereby "Johannes 'tauft' also den [Sohn], aber tödlich, indem er ihn in der Sintflut ertrinken läßt" (415). Ultimately, Kaiser understands the drowning motif as symbolizing neither religious nor moral guilt, but rather "ein Schuldzusammenhang der Kultur, der in die Institution der Familie eingesenkt ist […] Es handelt sich mithin um eine Kulturschuld, die ebenso ambivalent in ihren Folgen wie allgemein ist, denn jede Kultivierung in jeder Kultur fordert ihre Opfer" (430-431). Kaiser, "Aquis Submersus – versunkene Kindheit: Ein Literaturpsychologischer Versuch über Theodor Storm," *Euphorion* 73 (1979): 410-434.

He arrives at the parish rectory and meets the pastor, who is accompanied by his son, a young, pale boy of about four. As the days pass, Johannes finds himself inexplicably drawn to the child, and after a time finally discerns the root of his fixation: "Die Augen des schönen blassen Knaben, es waren ja *ihre* Augen!" (440, emphasis added). In the same instant that he recognizes Katharina in the boy's physiognomy, he also realizes that she must be the pastor's wife. An even more dramatic recognition soon takes place in the rectory's garden, however. In the story's climactic scene, Johannes returns from a walk on the moor and notices an enclosure of willow bushes framing a small pond, behind which he discovers Katharina playing with the boy. Unaware of Johannes' presence, Katharina at one point moves towards him and kneels down—"sie ließ das Haupt auf ihre Brust sinken, und es war, als wolle sie nur ungesehen vor dem Kinde in ihrem Leide ausruhen" (446).

This outwardly simple vignette in fact plays out the tragic disparity of intent and outcome that informs the imminent drowning scene, for in desiring not to be seen by her child for a brief moment, Katharina unwittingly lays the path for his death, which will occur while *he* is unseen for an even briefer moment. The division between visibility and non-visibility anticipates the drowning scene (and indeed the figural dimensions of water itself), which will divide the text between the "stage" of the adults' encounter, to which the reader is given access, and the unseen, "*obskene*" space mere feet away in which the child perishes. The "seen *skene*" of action comprises classical dramatic moments of recognition, as well as a struggle between moral duty and erotic impulse, with Katharina and Johannes respectively embodying each in a stichomythic exchange. Johannes pulls Katharina from her crouched position and confronts her about her marriage to the pastor during his absence in Amsterdam; Katharina defends herself with the revelation that the pastor "'hat das Amt dafür bekommen…und dein Kind den ehrlichen Namen'" (ibid.).

The emotional force of this revelation that the boy is Johannes' son is coupled with a tension between two forms of loyalty—one of parental obligation to the child's social legitimacy and one of romantic fidelity to the child's biological father—that incites a feverish dialogue. Johannes, initially in shock, expresses desperation and anger at the prospect of being separated from his lover and child by mere custom, while Katharina displays both resignation and relief over the societal and moral equilibrium that this custom ensures. The narration notes that "in diesem Augenblicke tönete ein zarter Gesang zu uns herüber. – 'Das Kind,' sagte [Katharina]. 'Ich muß zu dem Kinde; es könnte ihm ein Leids geschehen!' Aber meine Sinne zieleten nur auf das Weib, das sie begehrten" (447).

As the child's voice carries through the willows, Katharina makes to leave with a final appeal to moral obligation: "'Ich bin des anderen Mannes Weib; vergiß das nicht,'" but Johannes' journal recounts that "[m]ich hatte aber auf diese Worte ein fast wilder Zorn ergriffen" (448). Passion and piety collide, and the former proves to be stronger, for Johannes pulls Katharina back to him, and they embrace fervently. The text does not specify for how long, nor does it indicate when precisely the child's song falls silent. This distended instant coincides with what Johannes will subsequently realize to be the sacrifice of his son to erotic passion—not *casu periculoso*, but *culpa patris*.

The two lovers finally part when they hear the pastor's voice cutting through the now quiet autumn air, calling for Katharina. Johannes returns to the house, but is not there long before a scream—Katharina's—rings out from the direction of the pond. After hurrying back to the enclosure of willows, Johannes finds "nur das dunkle Wasser und Spuren feuchten Schlammes daneben auf dem Grase" (449). He then encounters the pastor, who reveals that Katharina has confessed the child's illicit origin. A graver report follows, however: "Die beiden Eltern haben es ertrinken lassen" (ibid.). The pastor enjoins Johannes immediately to capture his dead son's likeness in paint so that the

portrait can be placed in the church. Johannes accepts, but before he begins work, he has a critical realization: "…so meines Lebens Schuld und Buße gleich einem Blitze jählings aus dem Dunkel hob, so daß ich Glied um Glied die ganze Kette vor mir leuchten sahe" (ibid.).[26]

Johannes sets about immortalizing the remains of his son that have been retrieved from the water, copying down the small, supine form on his canvas. When he comes to the boy's hands, he suddenly takes artistic license and "malete auf seinem Bildniß ihm eine weiße Wasserlilie in die Hand, als sei es spielend damit eingeschlafen" (452). Precisely by virtue of its arbitrary introduction into the image,[27] the water lily, shown to be held as though in unintentional sleep, becomes an allegory for more than the jointure of innocence, death, and water. The portrait as a whole converges upon this small detail of the flower that derives not from the real world but instead from the artist's imagination, and as such stands for Johannes' recognition of guilt for his son's drowning; by a similar act of independent will as that of artistic invention, Johannes acknowledges his removal of the child from the world by inserting a new image into the painted scene. This acknowledgment continues to unfold dramatically: after leaving the room for a short pause in his labor, Johannes re-enters, and notices

> daß in dem kleinen Angesicht die Augenlider um ein Weniges sich gehoben hatten. Da bückete ich mich hinab, im Wahne, ich möchte noch einmal meines Kindes Blick gewinnen; aber als die kalten Augensterne vor mir lagen, überlief mich Grausen; mir war, als sähe ich die Augen jener Ahne des Geschlechtes, als wollten sie noch hier aus unseres Kindes Leichenantlitz künden: "Mein Fluch hat doch Euch Beide eingeholet!" – Aber zugleich...umfing ich mit beiden Armen den kleinen blassen Leichnam und hob ihn auf an meine Brust und herzete unter bitteren Thränen zum ersten Male mein geliebtes Kind. "Nein, nein, mein armer Knabe, deine Seele…die blickte nicht aus solchen Augen; was hier herausschaut, ist alleine noch der Tod. Nicht aus der Tiefe schreckbarer Vergangenheit ist es heraufgekommen; nichts anderes ist da als deines Vaters Schuld; sie hat uns alle in die schwarze Fluth hinabgerissen."
> […] Dann tauchete ich meinen Pinsel in ein dunkles Roth und schrieb unten in den Schatten des Bildes die Buchstaben; C. P. A. S. Das sollte heißen: Culpa Patris Aquis Submersus [...] (453)

[26] Here one notes the echoes of the opening passages of Stifter's *Abdias* (1842), discussed in Chapter 1, in which the cosmic *Blumenkette* principle is illustrated in part through the image of a young boy drowning.
[27] Interestingly, the white lily is also one of the main instances of the narrative's deviation from the Bonnix portrait, in which the young subject holds a red thistle (see Figures 2 and 3).

Johannes' private recognition of guilt immediately precedes his decision to add two visible *semata* of this guilt to the portrait: a pictorial allegory (the water lily) as well as the written cipher. This sequence invites us to recall the other painting associated with drowning in the novella—namely, the portrait of the *Ahnfrau*—along with the other valence of "parental law" that was tied to the natural order of generational inheritance. The image that Johannes paints, by comparison, stands for the retroactive acknowledgment of a past transgression that cannot be undone. In looking from one image to the other, therefore, we also witness one law of inheritance being replaced by another: the curse that preys upon the individual in the present *against* their will has been substituted by the willed remembrance of something that one would likely wish to forget, but chooses not to in a gesture of penitence.

Whether a conscious intention on Storm's part or not, the painted lily's subtle concatenation of guilt and confession with the element of water in fact invokes an established paradigm of atonement that subtends the juxtapositions of drowning and baptismal motifs in *Aquis Submersus*. Michel Foucault neatly explicates the connection between confession (and penitence more broadly) and water in his lectures on Tertullian and the origins of baptism as a sacrament. He first traces the Christian concept of repentance to the Platonic notion of *metanoia*, which is "the change of the soul […] the movement by which it turns away from what until then it had been looking for, and to which it was attached" in order to "turn towards the light, towards truth."[28] Tertullian would go on to argue that repentance—not to be confused with penitence, which involves *acts* of contrition, penance, and ultimately atonement, as opposed to mere remorse—was innately linked to the figure of John the Baptist, whose practice consisted

[28] Foucault, *On the Government of the Living (Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980)*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 128. Cf. William L. Cunningham, "Wassersymbolik in *Aquis Submersus*," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 27 (1978): 43; and Kaiser, "Aquis Submersus – versunkene Kindheit," 415.

first and foremost in "*baptimus paenitentiae*, the baptism of repentance […] that is to say nothing more than men's *regret* for their own sins."[29] If we consider the conjoined symbolism of baptism and drowning which Storm associates with Johannes, a similar progression is noticeable: first is the tragically literal submergence of his son that incites Johannes' acknowledgment of guilt (repentance), followed by his subsequent documents of penitence and confession (viz., the portrait and the journal).

While most critics interpret *Aquis Submersus* as a story about the inability of art to transcend finitude, in many ways it is more a story about how the decision to embrace this inability might lay the foundation for atonement.[30] At the beginning of this chapter, we saw how Storm's writing up to 1870 had begun to link law to the concept of inheritance (primarily in conventional terms of property and capital). This model of law is also at work in *Aquis Submersus*, where it takes the form of both natural and supernatural continuations of the past within the present. However, we also observed a second temporal motif emerge, namely the retrospectivity of memory and penitence; indeed, the entire *Binnenerzählung* turns out to be a confession of the guilt that was only cryptically acknowledged in the painting. As both the point within which Johannes can visually localize his guilt (reinforced by the inscription) and the *Ansatzpunkt* for the frame narrator's own memories of how he gradually pieced together the rectory's tragic past, the painting becomes a kind of portal: Johannes projects his representation of paternal guilt and filial innocence into the future *through* the image, while the frame narrator in a sense returns the gaze from the present, looking back through the image and into the past.[31] In this aspect of the portrait in particular one can hear echoes of the language that Walter Benjamin would use to describe his concept of the dialectical image:

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[29] Foucault, ibid., 129, 154 (emphasis added).
[30] Cf. Sven-Aage Jørgensen, "Vergangenheit und Vergänglichkeit: zur Funktion des Erinnerns in Theodor Storms Novellen," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 35 (1986): 11-12.
[31] Here I take a cue from Christiane Arndt's analysis of the painting's frame as primarily temporal, demarcating what happened in the past (i.e., the content of the picture) and what is happening in the

> Jede Gegenwart ist durch diejenigen Bilder bestimmt, die mit ihr synchronistisch sind: jedes Jetzt ist das Jetzt einer bestimmten Erkennbarkeit. In ihm ist die Wahrheit mit Zeit bis zum Zerspringen geladen [...] Nicht so ist es, daß das Vergangene sein Licht auf das Gegenwärtige oder das Gegenwärtige sein Licht auf das Vergangene wirft, sondern Bild ist dasjenige, worin das Gewesene mit dem Jetzt blitzhaft zu einer Konstellation zusammentritt [...] Das gelesene Bild, will sagen das Bild im Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit trägt im höchsten Grade den Stempel des kritischen, gefährlichen Moments, welcher allem Lesen zugrunde liegt.[32]

The *Bild* which Johannes paints contains a similarly "gefährlich" moment that is shared by both narrative frames (as well as by the gazes of their respective narrators). The instant of image-reading is precarious because it is challenged to house a flash of proper understanding in which the "Jetzt" and the "Gewesene" might simultaneously illuminate *one another*. Storm's novella literalizes this precarity of the read image, not merely by structuring the tale around a portrait and inscription whose veiled meanings must be interpreted, but by positioning the very act of viewing as an *Augenblick* that conjugates two distinct narrative times. Within these narrative times, two distinct processes of meaning-making take place, one commemorative and the other hermeneutic. As we shall see, this *Augenblick* is a trope that Storm would return to more than once in subsequent works.[33]

III.

In the final decade of his life, Storm produced numerous texts that carry forward as well as develop the core themes of transgression, guilt, and inheritance brought so

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present (i.e., a viewer observing it). Arndt suggests that this temporal distance also involves a hermeneutic distance contained within the framing structure of the text itself. The novella's very title suggests the water's surface as yet another "frame" separating life from death—while the child exits life through the water, he then returns from the realm of death and the past to enter into the realm of the living viewer's present via the frame of the painting. Arndt, "Die Überschreitung des Rahmens – Theodor Storms *Aquis Submersus*," in *Abschied von der Wirklichkeit: Probleme bei der Darstellung von der Realität im deutschsprachigen literarischen Realismus* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2009), 193-223. Also see Tove Holmes, *Literary Images: Viewing and Visuality in German Realism* (Ph.D diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2011), 149-180; and Franziska A. Irsigler, *Beschriebene Gesichter: Ekphrastische Porträts in der Erzählkunst des Poetischen Realismus* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis-Verlag, 2012), 410-411.

[32] Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. 5.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 578 [N 3.1].

[33] On this issue, Karl Friedrich Boll would likely hasten to emphasize what he believes to be Storm's (quite Augustinian) outlook that "Es gibt…kein unbeschwertes Verweilen im Augenblick, weil dieser neben der Vergangenheitsgewißheit, dem Bewußtsein eben hinschwindender Gegenwart, bereits Zukunftsgewißheit enthält." Boll, "Das Problem der Zeit bei Theodor Storm," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 18 (1969): 60.

vividly to the foreground in *Aquis Submersus*. Themes such as these are familiar hallmarks of the *Chroniknovelle* genre for which Storm's late writing is well known, yet one feels compelled to reiterate their close association with drowning scenes in his writing. *Carsten Curator* (1877), *Renate* (1878), *Hans und Heinz Kirch* (1882), *John Riew'* (1885), and *Bötjer Basch* (1886) all feature narrowly averted, accidental, or intentional deaths in water that occur in constellation with one or several of these themes. However, it is in two of Storm's very last novellas that the specific issues of sacrifice and atonement receive their most complex and poetic treatment.

"Wo einmal Wasser gewesen ist, kann auch wieder Wasser kommen" – *Ein Doppelgänger*

Ein Doppelgänger (1886/1887), one of Storm's most provocative and moving tales, is in many respects a counterpart-narrative to *Aquis Submersus*. In it, portraiture and memory also play a central role, but in strikingly modern ways. In this story it is not a retrospective aesthetics of penitence that is introduced by an image (in this case a photograph), rather the image appears in the story as a culminating event in the process of memory's re-construction.[34] The key symbol to which these themes of memory and retrospection are attached is starkly announced by the title Storm originally intended for the novella—*der Brunnen*.[35] As with the pond in *Aquis Submersus*, this site is where two paradigms of law—one juridical, the other moral—collide with sacrifice. The protagonist recalls Johannes of *Aquis Submersus* in numerous ways, most immediately in his very name: John. Like Johannes, John is set before the possibility of sacrificing his child, but

[34] E. A. McCormick highlights this particular facet as a key concern in Storm's work, writing that "both to the narrator of *Aquis Submersus* and to Storm in general the past is meaningful because it can be, and inevitably is, rescued into the present." McCormick, *Theodor Storm's Novellen: Essays on Literary Technique* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 101.
[35] For an overview of the story's conception, see Gunter Grimm, "Theodor Storm: *Ein Doppelgänger* (1886): soziales Stigma als 'modernes Schicksal,'" in *Romane und Erzählungen des bürgerlichen Realismus: neue Interpretationen*, ed. Horst Denkler (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1980), 332.

in contrast to the former, he is conscious of this possibility, and ultimately decides to offer something up in her place.[36]

Surprisingly few scholars have attended to the significance of the novella's frame narrative, focusing instead upon the thematic and poetological nuances of the *Binnenerzählung*, particularly issues of social critique,[37] the problematization of narration,[38] and the role of "poetic memory."[39] However, it is striking that the entire content summarized above is presented from out of partial memory and dream-like conjecture, not of the frame narrator himself, but rather on behalf of *another* character's memory, namely John's daughter, who has grown into an adult woman with only a fragmentary recollection of her father. The *Rahmenerzählung* begins when the narrator befriends a forester in a tavern and is invited to visit him and his wife at their idyllic woodland home. Once there, the narrator discovers that the forester's wife, Christine, hails from the same northern village as he. While accompanying her on a walk to gather *Immortellen* flowers from the woods, he enquires about her parents to find out whether he is familiar with the family. Christine replies that her father was named John Hansen, and that after her mother died when she was three her father had been her sole source of comfort and

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[36] As had been the case with Johannes in *Aquis Submersus*, John's story in *Ein Doppelgänger* contains a number of allusions to his Biblical namesake, John the Baptist. See Eckart Pastor, "Der Heilsweg des Verdammten: *Ein Doppelgänger*," in *Die Sprache der Erinnerung: zu den Novellen von Theodor Storm* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum-Verlag, 1988), 172-174.

[37] Frank X. Braun, "Theodor Storm's *Doppelgänger*," *The Germanic Review* 32 (1957): 267-272; Barbara Burns, "'Vorbestrafft': Differing Perspectives on Reintegration and Recidivism in Narratives by Storm and Fallada," *Neophilologus* 86.3 (2002): 437-453.

[38] Katra A. Byram, "German Realism's Proximal Others: Franz Grillparzer's *The Poor Fiddler* and Theodor Storm's *Ein Doppelgänger*," in *Realism's Others*, ed. Geoffrey Baker and Eva Aldea (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 49-67; Wolfgang Riedel, "Das Wunderbare im Realismus (Droste, Gotthelf, Keller, Storm)," in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Sabine Schneider and Barbara Hunfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), 78.

[39] Volker Ladenthin, "'Das ist aber Poesie; Sie sind am Ende nicht bloß ein Advokat!': Zur Theorie des Erzählens in Theodor Storms Novelle 'Ein Doppelgänger,'" in *Gerechtes Erzählen: Studien zu Thomas Manns Erählung "das Gesetz," zu Theodor Storm und Ernst Toller* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010), 47-61; John Pizer, "Guilt, Memory, and the Motif of the Double in Storm's *Aquis Submersus* and *Ein Doppelgänger*," ibid.; Manfred Schunicht, "Theodor Storm: *Ein Doppelgänger*," in *Wege der Literaturwissenschaft: Festschrift für Paul Gerhard Klussmann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Jutta Kolkenbrock-Netz (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1985), 174-183; and Pastor, "Der Heilsweg des Verdammten," 166.

protection until his sudden disappearance five years later. She then confesses something strange:

> "mir ist oftmals, als hätt' ich vorher, bei Lebzeiten meiner Mutter, einen andern Vater gehabt – den ich fürchtete, vor dem ich mich verkroch, der mich anschrie und mich und meine Mutter schlug [...] und das ist doch unmöglich! [...] meine Mutter hat nur diesen einen Mann gehabt." [40]

The forester later tells the narrator in private that Christine's father was also known by a second name, John Glückstadt, after the name of the prison where he had served his sentence for theft prior to Christine's birth. The forester requests that the narrator keep this information to himself, however, since Christine is unaware of her father's criminal past and the forester worries that "ihr Vater, den sie kindlich verehrt, würde mit jenem Schreckbild zusammenfallen, das ihre Phantasie ihr immer wieder vorbringt und das leider keine bloße Phantasie war" (529). Laden with these intriguing pieces of information, the narrator later finds himself gazing out of his window while preparing for bed, regarding the tranquil pond and water lilies in the garden below. In spite of the serene evening, the narrator recalls, "die Vergangenheit [wollte] nicht schlafen […] vor mein inneres Auge drängten abwechselnd sich zwei öde Orte: ein verlassener Brunnen mit vermorschtem Plankwerk, der in der Nähe meiner Vaterstadt auf einem weiten Felde lag," and the decrepit house of John Glückstadt, "von dem ich heute erfahren hatte, daß er eigentlich John Hansen geheißen habe" (531).

It is from out of this semi-oneiric state that the narrator proceeds to reconstruct the story (which comprises the text's inner frame) of Christine's father and the two sides of his character, one violent and one gentle, that corresponded with his two names. What is of primary importance to our specific interests are the circumstances surrounding John's unwitnessed death and the role that this event plays in the process of his daughter's later, retroactive amendment of her memory with the help of the frame narrator. Several years after killing Christine's mother before her eyes, John has

[40] *SW* Bd. 3, 526.

transformed into a repentant and devoted father. His status as a convict has led to a vicious lack of employment, however, and he and Christine struggle to survive. Despite these hardships, he obstinately refuses to entertain the possibility of his daughter begging in the streets, holding fast to his new, self-imposed principles even as the stain of his former lawlessness brings hunger and destitution into their home.

At a loss, John considers the only other options left to him: borrowing or stealing. He could appeal to the mayor of the town for a loan, but shame and worries of once again being regarded with suspicion eliminate this possibility. He could also steal vegetables from his neighbor's garden, but his conscience wins over as he reminds himself that the neighbor had helped provide wood for his wife's coffin. Finally, John envisions the field just outside the town and the unlimited supply of potatoes that he could collect from it under cover of darkness. John's bulwark of moral law finally crumbles, overcome by the stronger laws of desperation. He sets out into the field to begin gathering, but in the middle of his efforts he stops suddenly, penetrated by an inner imperative to give back the stolen harvest—

> Ihm war im Kopfe, als senke eine Waage sich auf und ab; dann sprach er langsam: "Ich kann nicht, lieber Gott! Mein Kind! Es soll ans Kreuz geschlagen werden; laß mich es retten; ich bin ja nur ein Mensch!"
> Er stand und horchte, als solle eine Stimme von oben aus der Nacht zu ihm herunterkommen; dann krampfte seine Hand sich um den Sack; er lief nur weiter, immer weiter […] (572)

John thus finds himself before a crossroads of sacrificial necessity: either to transgress against his hard-won scaffold of moral purity for the sake of his daughter, or to offer her up as a sacrifice to the laws of conscience and ethical order. After invoking the imagery of Christ's crucifixion as a parallel for Christine, John chooses the former sacrifice, and hurries through the dark field with his bounty.[41] He loses his bearings in the darkness,

[41] David Jackson aligns John (rather than his daughter) with Christ insofar as he sacrifices himself out of love and suffers prior to a death for which society is ultimately to blame. Wolfgang Tschorn, though not veering into Christological interpretation, similarly understands John's decision to transgress against his inner framework of socially determined morality as a sacrifice that ultimately allows his daughter to enter the very same bourgeois social sphere from which he has derived his model of moral law. See Jackson,

however, and falls into the well, its opening having been left uncovered since the previous winter when he pried up the planks for firewood in order to keep himself and Christine warm. Now it is summer, however, and the humid air is suddenly rent apart by thunder, lightning, and torrential rain.

Unlike the other watery sites of death in Storm's work, the well is not a natural source, but a manmade structure into and out of which water passes. This variability and non-visibility of the well that begins to slowly fill with rain might reflect memory's ability to be fragmentary, missing, or whole; indeed, this is the central dilemma for Christine's character in the outermost narrative frame.[42] In a slightly different fashion than the drowned child in *Aquis Submersus*, here Storm's alignment of water and the workings of memory centers as much upon the characteristics of the water itself as upon the human figure that falls into it.

Some time after John's sudden disappearance, various rumors begin to circulate throughout the village; some say that he drowned himself in the sea out of desperation over his plight, others that he had resumed his criminal existence in another town. The mayor declares that John had been punished by his community for his transgressions against the law as a young man, but that he now is in the hands of "einem anderen Richter" (i.e., God), thus suggesting that *Gesetz* and *Gerechtigkeit* do not coincide, for just because one gets fulfilled does not mean that the other necessarily does (574).[43] This recalls the fact, learned early on in the *Binnenerzählung*, that the well in which John perishes stands on ground once occupied by gallows, thus connoting that in the end he

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Theodor Storm, 244; and Tschorn, *Idylle und Verfall: die Realität der Familie im Werk Theodor Storms* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1978), 164-166.

[42] Eckart Pastor similarly links the capacity of the well to be empty or full of memory, but, interestingly, associates this motif with John himself rather than with Christine: "Was ihm [John] fehlt, ist das Wasser, das Element des Mütterlichen, aber auch der Erinnerung schlechthin. In der Chiffre des Brunnens ohne Wasser ist das Bewußtsein eines Menschen gekennzeichnet, der nichts zu erinnern hat" (Pastor 174).

[43] Harro Segeberg, "Theodor Storm als 'Dichter-Jurist': zum Verhältnis von juristischer, moralischer und poetischer Gerechtigkeit in den Erzählungen 'Draußen im Heidedorf' und 'Ein Doppelgänger,'" *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 41 (1992): 78.

suffered execution for his crimes against the lawful order.[44] Here, as in Storm's other works, law is aligned with the temporal movement of inheritance. However, John's inadvertent atonement only occurs after he first makes a conscious, sacrificial exchange within the order of moral law itself, choosing to give way on his self-imposed principles in order to fulfill his parental obligation to Christine. This decision to sacrifice his own laws ultimately ensures that his daughter does not become a sacrifice *to* them. However, John's very life is lost soon after this decision is made, bringing to mind Gerhard Kaiser's description of a "Kulturschuld, die ebenso ambivalent in ihren Folgen wie allgemein ist, denn jede Kultivierung in jeder Kultur fordert ihre Opfer."[45]

The frame narrator comes back to himself at last and retires to bed. The following morning, he browses the small *Ahnengalerie* in the parlor, and at once notices a photograph that has been framed with the flowers Christine had picked the previous evening. It is a portrait of John made shortly after his return from military service, and before his crime and prison term instigated the tragic sequence of events that would follow. The narrator describes his face as devoid of sorrow or guilt, his eyes gazing "ernst, doch sicher in die Welt hinaus" (577). The narrator exclaims that *this* is John Hansen, who will not be conquered by the "doppelgängerische Schatten" of John Glückstadt. Addressing Christine in his mind, the narrator tells her to relinquish the "Gespenst" of a second, wicked father that haunts her memory: "der Spuk und dein geliebter Vater, sie sind nur eines: er war ein Mensch, er irrte, und er hat gelitten!" (ibid.). Studying this portrait of John Hansen, the man whom Christine remembers as her father following her mother's death, ultimately allows the narrator to retroactively consolidate his *own* memory of her "other" father, John Glückstadt.

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[44] Gideon Haut notes that well into the 1830s, when the story supposedly takes place, Schleswig-Holstein was still implementing sixteenth-century legal codes according to which thieves of every sort were to be hanged. Haut, "Theodor Storms *Ein Doppelgänger* und das Strafrecht des 19. Jahrhunderts, oder Warum John Hansen seinen Hals riskiert," in *Dichterjuristen: Studien zur Poesie des Rechts vom 16. bis 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Yvonne Nilges (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2014), 169.
[45] Kaiser 430-431.

The narrator relates all of his speculations and thoughts to the forester, and then sets off on his journey homeward. Time passes, and one day he receives a letter from the forester who reveals that he passed along the narrator's account to Christine, who has now herself shared in the same experience of reconciliatory (as opposed to traumatic) *Nachträglichkeit*: "das Bild des John Glückstadt trägt nun einen vollen Rosenkranz; seine Tochter hat jetzt mehr an ihm; nicht nur den Vater, sondern einen ganzen Menschen" (578-579). This calls our attention to the differences as well as the affinities between Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* and what transpires in Storm's tale. Freud is concerned primarily with the anamnetic reconstruction of repressed trauma, particularly in hysterics, of which he writes: "Überall findet sich, daß eine Erinnerung verdrängt wird, die nur *nachträglich* zum Trauma geworden ist."[46] In Storm's novella, by contrast, Christine has not simply repressed traumatic memories, but rather subconsciously divided a remembered person into two distinct *personae*. What the narrator brings about is thus not so much a retroactive contextualization of a submerged memory, but a "reunion" of a fragmented memory with itself.

In *Ein Doppelgänger*, a portrait is the ending point rather than the starting point for remembrance, which invites us to compare its essential function with that of the painting in *Aquis Submersus*. Whereas the latter sought to engage the viewer (on behalf of the artist) in a sustained ritual of penitent memorialization, the photograph is simultaneously the focal object *and* stumbling block of Christine's memory, which must eventually be re-contextualized from within the present. In other words, the photograph, as an objective authentication of her father's "having been"—what Roland Barthes terms the *noeme* of photographic images—simultaneously indicates a missing piece of memory that must be

[46] Freud, *Entwurf einer Psychologie (1895)*, in *Gesammelte Werke. Nachtragsband: Texte aus den Jahren 1885-1938*, ed. Angela Richards (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987), 375-477, here 448.

retroactively formed.[47] It is interesting to contrast Storm's depiction of photographic memorial with that of Barthes, who describes photographs of the deceased as ironically making it more difficult to recollect the departed person. Barthes compares this process with trying to remember a dream: "it is the same effort, the same Sisyphean labor: to reascend, straining toward the essence, to climb back down without having seen it, and to begin all over again."[48]

As we have seen, the content of this re-contextualized memory is "einen ganzen Menschen," a man whose baneful qualities are first expressed in his transgressions against both civic law and his family. However, this "Schreckenbild" is eventually subsumed in John's dedication to moral principles and love for his daughter—i.e., the very moral frameworks of duty which Johannes never had a chance to fulfill in *Aquis Submersus*. Ultimately, it is John's sacrificial exchange of moral imperatives that allow him at last to become a full memory for his daughter many years after the fact. He therefore achieves what Johannes failed to, namely, to make the *right* kind of sacrifice. Johannes' mistake was transformed into a lasting memorial in his portrait of the son he unwittingly offered up. The painting not only memorializes the drowned child but will also ensure the repetition of "Schuld und Buße" by displaying the fixedness of the terrible memory. What the image *qua* image communicates above all is the certainty of a *memory's* having been, regardless of how uncertain or contingent the act of remembering may be. As an image, the boy shows how his own drowning can never be undone any more than the past can be altered or the paint re-distributed into a different configuration on the canvas.

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[47] For Barthes, the key difference between photography and other representational art (e.g., painting), is that the photographic referent cannot have been imitated, but was necessarily *there* at the time the picture was taken: "the name of Photography's *noeme* will therefore be: 'That-has-been,' or again: the Intractable […] what I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject […] it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred." Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 2010), 77.

[48] Ibid., 66.

By contrast, John's sacrifice of his own laws—and, in the end, his own life—for his daughter is retroactively incorporated into her memory in front of his own portrait; here, to borrow Barthes' formulation, it is the person in the portrait that is the *noeme* of "having been," as opposed to the portrait-maker's memory and guilt. The photograph of John, like the painting of the drowned child, is ornamented with flowers, but instead of a water lily in a lifeless hand that allegorizes an innocent son's death in water, John Hansen is framed by *Immortellen* and roses plucked from the edge of a serene pond by the hand of his living and loving daughter. Barthes, describing a particular photograph of his deceased mother in which he feels at last to have discovered her authentic trace, could well speak for Christine too when he writes, "in this veracious photograph, the being I love, whom I have loved, is not separated from itself: at last it coincides. And, mysteriously, this coincidence is a kind of metamorphosis."[49]

"Die Zeit des lastenden Erbes" – *Der Schimmelreiter*

As befits a final work (and, for many critics, a *magnum opus*), *Der Schimmelreiter* (1888) draws together the leitmotifs from the novellas that precede it. As has been the case in each of the texts discussed above, water and drowning emblematize a complex series of relationships between lawful order, transgression, sacrifice, and atonement. However, *Der Schimmelreiter* does not merely find itself before a "path" familiar from Storm's earlier narratives, but also follows this path to its very edge. In this respect *Der Schimmelreiter* represents a true "method" (*meta-hodos*) of Storm's storytelling, for within it the major symbolic frameworks of his last stories coalesce: the climax of the tale—portrayed through three separate levels of narrated memory—comprises a self-sacrificial drowning that aims to atone for transgressed laws.

[49] Ibid., 109.

As in the texts we have already examined, the outermost narrative frame takes the form of remembrance—specifically, the narrator's memory of reading a chronicle as a child. We are promptly inserted into this account (the middle frame), whose *Rahmenerzähler* recalls riding along the austere North Frisian coast during a violent storm one October night around 1830.[50] The first crucial aspect of the account's *mise en scène*, in contrast to that of *Aquis Submersus*, is that the narrator's vision of the landscape is almost completely impeded. The sea and sky to his right coalesce within an indistinguishable swarm of darkness and water. This impaired visibility results in a general sense of blurred boundaries that at once foreshadows spectral phenomena, and, as if on cue, something emerges from out of the gloom ahead of the narrator:

> ich hörte nichts; aber immer deutlicher, wenn der halbe Mond ein karges Licht herabließ, glaubte ich eine dunkle Gestalt zu erkennen, und bald, da sie näher kam, sah ich es, sie saß auf einem Pferde, einem hochbeinigen hageren Schimmel; ein dunkler Mantel flatterte um ihre Schultern, und im Vorbeifliegen sahen mich zwei brennende Augen aus einem bleichen Antlitz an.[51]

This passage establishes a dramatic contrast between the swirling darkness of the coast and the detail of the apparition;[52] soon, however, these supernatural forms are swallowed up by the natural environment:

> […] Dann sah ich [die Erscheinung] fern und ferner von mir; dann war's, als säh ich plötzlich ihren Schatten an der Binnenseite des Deiches hinuntergehen.
> […] Als ich jene Stelle erreicht hatte, sah ich hart am Deich im Kooge unten das Wasser einer großen Wehle blinken […]
> Das Wasser war, trotz des schützenden Deiches, auffallend unbewegt; der Reiter konnte es nicht getrübt haben; ich sah nichts weiter von ihm. (636)

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[50] Much scholarship has been produced on the topic of Storm's sources of inspiration for the setting and plot of *Der Schimmelreiter*, in addition to the many additions and alterations to the draft that followed. Gerd Eversberg is among the more prolific and informed critics in this respect, and the following two studies offer a useful overview of the principle findings and conclusions hitherto: "Raum und Zeit in Storms Novelle 'Der Schimmelreiter,'" *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 58 (2009): 15-23; and *Der echte Schimmelreiter: so (er)fand Storm seinen Hauke Haien* (Heide: Boyens Verlag, 2010). Cf. Karl Ernst Laage's commentary on Storm's research and sources for the tale in: *SW* Bd. 3, 1064-1082.

[51] *SW* Bd. 3, 635-636.

[52] Wolfgang Preisendanz suggests that Storm's "Erzählpraxis" possesses a unique "artistischen Rang" and "Ausdruckskraft" grounded in pictorial perspectivism, which arises from an author holding to a "System bestimmter Sehbedingungen; […] Der Erzähler richtet sich auf vorgegebene, in Bezug auf das Erzählen präexistente Fakten und betont somit den Bezug zum Erzählbaren als einen perspektivisch bedingten." Preisendanz, "Gedichtete Perspektiven in Storms Erzählkunst," in *Wege des Realismus: zur Poetik und Erzählkunst im 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977), 209-210. On the role of vision and perception more broadly, see Claus-Michael Ort, *Zeichen und Zeit*, 20-49; and Andrew Webber, "The Uncanny Rides Again: Theodor Storm's Double Vision," *Modern Language Review* 84.4 (1989): 860-873.

As quickly as the specter had emerged, it withdraws from view before being reduced to a mere "shadow" and seeming to descend the dike wall that stands between the bog and the sea on the other side, leaving no trace for the narrator to find; not even the deep pool of seawater created by past breaches in the wall shows the faintest disturbance.

The remainder of the novella comprises the biography of the ghostly rider, Hauke Haien, and the events that lead to the instant of his drowning which the narrator has just witnessed as a spectral repetition. The teller of this tale is yet another frame narrator, the schoolmaster from the nearby village.[53] He begins the story of Hauke Haien (which forms the innermost frame), born in the local village toward the middle of the previous century and obsessed from his earliest years with finding a solution to the ancient threat posed to the community by the sea. A great deal has been written about the qualities and implications of Hauke's *Bildung*, so let it suffice here simply to mention the most important points. Though the son of a modest farmer, Hauke teaches himself geometry at a young age and soon combines his prodigious mathematical gifts with his fascination for the sea, spending whole days staring out at the water. He recognizes that the walls of the dike have been constructed at too steep an angle, resulting in increased force and erosion from the breaking waves. Filled with ambition not only to assert control over nature, but also to gain respect and admiration from the village, Hauke sets out to marry the local dikereeve's daughter, Elke, and eventually to become dikereeve himself.

The elemental conflict at the core of Hauke's confrontation with the sea—along with the superstitious anxiety his neighbors attach to it—is the one around which

[53] Albert Meier claims that *Der Schimmelreiter* is about the conditions of possibility in storytelling per se rather than the social or ethical problems of the narrative content. Meier argues that by using the classic and Realist medium of the novella to tell a story that formally and thematically betrays the tenets of Realism (i.e., a ghost story), Storm himself knowingly subverts and challenges these very tenets. Meier, "'Wie kommt ein Pferd nach Jevershallig?': die Subversion des Realismus in Theodor Storms *Der Schimmelreiter*," in *Weltentwürfe in Literatur und Medien: phantastische Wirklichkeiten, realistische Imaginationen. Festschrift für Marianne Wünsch*, ed. Hans Krah and Claus-Michael Ort (Kiel: Ludwig, 2002), 167-179.

scholars of Storm's novella have situated the other dialectical relationships that pervade the story (namely, rationality versus superstition, Enlightenment versus myth, and culture versus nature).[54] For the purposes of this chapter, I wish to begin with a relatively small component of this much larger network of themes, namely the opposition between the physical longevity of the natural landscape and the "spectral" immateriality of human memory. While Hauke's innovative dike and the sea remain, his very being becomes an object of local superstition, the last instants of his life and decision repeated in the form of a ghostly apparition that appears and then disappears again at the site of his drowning.

In what follows, I will explore how these variant "spatializations" of memory—i.e., the permanence of material and natural memorials, on the one hand, and the shadowy spectrality of revenance and legend, on the other—stand in relation to Hauke's drowning. Doing so will allow us to observe how in his last story, Storm once again conceptualizes inheritance and retrospection in terms of law and atonement, and portrays the liminal threshold between them as an instant of sacrifice.

Sacrifice Deferred

As a point of entry, it warrants mentioning that Theodor Adorno regarded the representation of memory (and temporality more generally) in spatial terms as Storm's primary narrative trademark. So central did Adorno find this spatialization of time and its traces to be in Storm's writing that he suggested it to be intelligible even within the

[54] Annemarie Burchard, "Theodor Storms *Schimmelreiter*: ein Mythos im Werden," *Antaios* 2 (1961): 456-69; W.A. Coupe, "Der Doppelsinn des Lebens: die Doppeldeutigkeit in der Novellistik Theodor Storms," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 26 (1977): 9-21; Ian Findlay, "Myth and Redemption in Theodor Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 11 (1975): 397-403; Wolfgang Frühwald, "Hauke Haien, der Rechner: Mythos und Technikglaube in Theodor Storms Novelle *Der Schimmelreiter*," in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte: Festschrift für Richard Brinkmann*, ed. Jürgen Brummack et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 1981), 438-457; Sylvain Guarda, "Storms *Schimmelreiter* und Schillers *Wallenstein*: Geschichte Versus Mythos," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 53 (2004): 109-118; Margaret T. Peischl, "The Persistent Pagan in Theodor Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Seminar* 22.2 (1986): 112-125; Irmgard Roebling, "Von Menschentragik und wildem Naturgeheimnis: die Thematisierung von Natur und Weiblichkeit in *Der Schimmelreiter*," in *Stormlektüren: Festschrift für Karl Ernst Laage zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Gerd Eversberg (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 183-214; and Robert Vellusig, "Aberglaube nach der Aufklärung: Theodor Storms Schimmelreiter," in *Nachklange der Aufklarung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Für Werner M. Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Müller-Salget and Sigurd Paul Scheichl (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2008), 197-215.

typographical form of the texts themselves. In what he terms "Storms ernste[r] Gedankenstrich," for instance, Adorno not only sees a visual ligament joining past events to the subsequent recollection of them like "Falten auf der Stirn der Texte." More significantly, he identifies in them a delineation of a "Zeit […] des lastenden Erbes" that seems to contain "etwas vom Unheil des Naturzusammenhangs […] So diskret versteckt sich der Mythos im neunzehnten Jahrhundert; er sucht Unterschlupf in der Typographie."[55]

This mythic element, which Adorno links to the portrayal of time and memory, has been regarded as central to Hauke's trajectory, culminating in his dramatic final act. One component of the mythos that saturates Storm's novella is a certain demonic or even Faustian characteristic which the villagers ascribe to Hauke's ambition, intellectual pride, and obsessive pursuit of acquiring land and public recognition.[56] However, the component that is most relevant to the present chapter is the confrontation between two different paradigms of law. The first of these is found in an ancient Frisian practice of sacrificing a living creature in order to ensure the longevity of a new human structure (in this case, Hauke's new dike). This primeval, cultic requirement clashes starkly with the second mode of law, namely the rationalist codes and imperatives of morality which Hauke both upholds and eventually transgresses against. As we shall see, the collision of these differing modes of lawfulness—one rooted in rituals of sacrificial offering and the other in the repudiation of such practices—establishes the conditions for Hauke's suicidal drowning which he himself ultimately designates as a sacrificial offering.

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[55] Adorno, "Satzzeichen," in *Noten zur Literatur. Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. 11, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 106-113, here 108, 109.

[56] See Winfried Freund, "Heros oder Dämon? Theodor Storms *Der Schimmelreiter*," in *Deutsche Novellen: von der Klassik bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993), 187-198; Johannes Harnischfeger, "Modernisierung und Teufelspakt: die Funktion des Dämonischen in Theodor Storms *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 49 (2000): 23-44; Volker Hoffmann, "Theodor Storm: *Der Schimmelreiter*. Eine Teufelspaktgeschichte als realistische Lebensgeschichte," in *Erzählungen des 19. Jahrhunderts* Bd. 2 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), 333-370; and Ernst Loeb, "Faust ohne Transzendenz: Theodor Storms *Schimmelreiter*," in *Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures. In Memory of Fred O. Nolte*, ed. Lieselotte Dieckmann and Erich Hofacker (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1964), 121-132.

The first paradigm of "cultic law" is introduced shortly after Hauke, recently instated as dikereeve, is inspired to construct a new dike that will both redouble security against flooding and also integrate a new swath of fertile marshland into the territory already protected by the current wall. Elke (now his wife) cautions him not to be hasty, noting that the locals will most likely resist the project, citing an old belief that the tidal streams ramifying inland across the vast shore should not be obstructed. "Das war ein Vorwand für die Faulen!" Hauke replies, "Weshalb denn sollte man den Priel nicht stopfen können?" (692). Elke goes on to recount a gruesome rite that she remembers overhearing the household servants discussing when she was a child. "…sie meinten, wenn ein Damm dort halten solle, müsse was Lebigs da hineingeworfen und mit verdämmt werden" (ibid.). Hauke again dismisses this archaic imperative as inane superstition, but the practice is soon enough revealed to exercise as strong a hold over the local imagination as ever. When the construction of the new dike is nearly complete, Hauke discovers his workers furtively trying to bury a stray dog in the earthen wall. He commands them to stop, declaring that "bei unserem Werke soll kein Frevel sein!" (721). The language of "Frevel" immediately establishes a framework of lawfulness that is divided down the middle: Hauke, disgusted by the "Heidenlehre" of his workers, forbids them from performing the blood sacrifice that they believe to be necessary for guaranteeing the community's protection from the sea (722). The moralistic mode of imperative invoked by Hauke proves not to be as easily observed, however.

Later in the story, Hauke is conducting his usual inspections of the dike. At the point where the original wall meets his newly constructed one, he makes a disturbing discovery: the older structure bears the signs of erosion and instability at the precise spot where the tidal streams once flowed inland. Hauke is overcome with panic, recognizing in an instant that this vulnerable section of the dike could spell the doom of the entire village if it were ever exposed to a sufficiently violent storm. In the same instant, he

realizes that the only way to protect the village would be to sacrifice the recently won moorland to the sea by puncturing the wall of his new dike and reverting to the original boundary line in order to alleviate the potential force of stormy waves.

If Hauke had infringed upon the ancient laws of sacrifice by depriving the new dike of a living offering, he will now transgress against his own moral framework by carrying out a burial of a figurative sort. Desperate over the choice of either undoing the years of vision and labor that had been devoted to his new dike or of investing the additional labor and expense that would be necessary for reinforcing the original structure, Hauke allows a simple, dangerous thought to take hold of him: perhaps the damage is not as grave as appearances might suggest. He says nothing to Elke of what he has discovered, though she senses an unspoken burden, and the following morning he returns to the site. The faint glimmer of hope that had been kindled in his mind the day before suddenly flares brighter when he at first cannot find the damaged spot,

> erst da er gegen die blendenden Strahlen seine Augen mit der Hand beschattete, konnte er es nicht verkennen; aber dennoch, die Schatten in der gestrigen Dämmerung mußten ihn getäuscht haben; es kennzeichnete sich jetzt nur schwach […] 'Es war so schlimm nicht,' sprach er erleichtert zu sich selber […]
> Das Jahr ging weiter, aber je weiter es ging…um so unruhiger ging oder ritt Hauke an dieser Stelle vorüber, er wandte die Augen ab, er ritt hart an der Binnenseite des Deiches; ein paar Mal, wo er dort hätte vorüber müssen, ließ er sein schon gesatteltes Pferd wieder in den Stall zurückführen; dann wieder, wo er nichts dort zu tun hatte, wanderte er, um nur rasch und ungesehen von seiner Werfte fortzukommen, plötzlich und zu Fuß dahin; manchmal auch war er umgekehrt, er hatte es sich nicht zumuten können, die unheimliche Stelle aufs Neue zu betrachten…denn wie ein Gewissensbiß, der außer ihm Gestalt gewonnen hatte, lag dies Stück des Deiches ihm vor Augen […] und Niemandem, selbst nicht seinem Weibe, durfte er davon reden. (739-740)

Here, the rupture in the protective body of the wall has become an externalization of Hauke's own conscience and fissured moral system; the deeper he buries his premonitions and enemied thoughts, the more visible and material the "unheimliche Stelle" grows in turn.

In the final scene of the schoolmaster's narration, Hauke is given one last chance to remedy his concealment. A torrential storm unlike any before lashes the coast, and

Hauke frantically patrols the wall's perimeter. Suddenly, he notices local men attempting to perforate the new dike, which he had privately recognized before as the only means of saving the village from a flood. But in this moment, Hauke, blinded by fury, forbids them; seconds later, at the point where the old and new walls converge at the "unheimliche Stelle," the sea breaks through. "'Euere Schuld, Deichgraf!' schrie eine Stimme aus dem Haufen: 'Euere Schuld! Nehmt's mit vor Gottes Thron!'" (750).

Before turning to the final moment of Hauke's story—the very moment witnessed by the frame narrator as a spectral apparition at the beginning of the text—we must briefly consider how its sacrificial implications have been sown. In particular, I want to examine several senses in which Hauke's concealment of the truth (both from Elke and from himself) bears a direct relation to his final act of atonement and offering. Understanding this relation will also allow us to better apprehend the kind of trace that Hauke's sacrificial drowning leaves behind. These specific issues surrounding concealment, sacrifice, and intelligibility can be fruitfully approached via a detour into Søren Kierkegaard's own thinking about them.

Sacrifice Conceived

The 1843 book (or "Dialectical Lyric," according to its subtitle) *Fear and Trembling* is first and foremost a sustained meditation upon the scene of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22.[57] On a more essential level, though, it is an experimental foray into the imagined psychological interior of Abraham, from the moment of God's command that he sacrifice Isaac, to the three-day journey to Mount Moriah, to the instant in which he wholly commits, knife raised, to kill his son. Though there is much to be said about this text, the aspect of it that will be most immediately helpful for my reading of Hauke's

[57] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling / The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 21-132.

drowning is Kierkegaard's linked assessments of sacrificial register, on the one hand, and the concealment of truth, on the other.

A good place to begin is with Kierkegaard's systematic division of subjective activity and experience into the categories of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious (a signature delineation that runs through most of his thought). In *Fear and Trembling*, Abraham's decision to sacrifice his son is read through each of these lenses. Throughout, the principle scale upon which Kierkegaard measures the gradated qualification of Abraham's sacrificial will is his concealment from Isaac of what is about to happen. Kierkegaard's interest in the role of concealment and secrecy in this terrifying Biblical scene is implicitly announced at the outset by the very surname of the text's pseudonymous author, Johannes de Silentio.[58] For Kierkegaard, the various registers within which Abraham's silence might be read bear directly upon the sacrificial status of his (intended) act.

Within the "aesthetic" sphere, one individual's decision to hide a certain truth from another individual might correspond with what is right if the concealed information had been deemed to be potentially traumatizing or otherwise painful for the latter. Within the ethical or "universal" sphere, by contrast, moral imperative mandates that the truth *always* be revealed, and thus designates any concealment of truth (regardless of the emotional or "aesthetic" effect it might have upon those who learn it) as being in opposition to what is right. However, within the so-called "religious" sphere, it becomes impossible either to reveal *or* conceal truth (in this case, divinely imparted truth) because any semantic content it might contain would transcend human understanding in the first place.[59] Kierkegaard maintains that any act of faith necessarily occurs beyond—and at

[58] The integral status of the unseen and unknown in this Biblical tale would later capture the attention of Erich Auerbach to a similar degree, leading him to select it as the exemplum of his concept of narrative *Hintergründigkeit*. Auerbach, "Die Narbe des Odysseus," in *Mimesis. Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag, 2001), 5-27, esp. 9-14.
[59] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 94, 122.

times via an outright suspension of—the ethical. This is because faith places the human individual in a *direct* relation to the Absolute (i.e., the divine), whereas ethics *integrates* the individual into a universal (i.e., human) context.[60] Consequently, any act that is carried out vis-à-vis the universal sphere of moral laws and expectations cannot also qualify as an act of faith, just as any act carried out vis-à-vis the divine sphere of the Absolute becomes incommensurable with the human, universal sphere of ethics and logic.[61]

Having established these categories for judging human action, Kierkegaard turns to the explicit issue of sacrifice. Like Erich Auerbach after him, Kierkegaard contrasts the ancient Greek paradigm with the Biblical, taking the example of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia. In the former instance, Agamemnon, as a tragic hero, commits an unethical act of filicide (i.e., an individuated transgression) in the service of a higher (i.e., collective or universal) ethical end. In this way Agamemnon "finds repose in the universal" and so is freed from having "only himself alone," which, as Kierkegaard notes, is what "constitutes the dreadfulness of the situation" that befalls Abraham.[62] That is, Agamemnon exchanges one level of the ethical for another, replacing his individuated anguish over having to kill his daughter with the acknowledgment and fulfillment of his royal duty to his troops and kingdom. By contrast, a "hero of faith" such as Abraham must suspend the universal altogether—according to which his acts of concealment and his intended act of slaughter have no intelligible correspondence with the ethical—through his acknowledgment and fulfillment of a direct relation to the divine.[63]

Ethics and reason are not the only things at stake in Abraham's sacrifice, however. Jacques Derrida notes how Biblical narrative—and this scene in particular—

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[60] Ibid., 64.
[61] Ibid., 67.
[62] Ibid., 89.
[63] Ibid., 69-70. Stanley Cavell suggests that the "pain" and "danger" of Abraham's silence derives not so much from a torsion between this acknowledgment and his ethical horror over "the inevitability of his silence," but more from his "fear of the false word, and the deep wish that the right word be found for doing what one must." Cavell, "Kierkegaard's *On Authority and Revelation*," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 165.

presents an annulment of the traditional sacrificial logic rooted in an economy of exchange and anticipated return. Ironically, a sacrifice carried out in the register of faith as Kierkegaard conceives it is one in which there *can be no faith* in a symmetrical return on what is expended. This is the paradoxical "commerce" of Christian sacrifice prefigured by Abraham's decision to offer up Isaac; it is "an economic calculation [that] integrates absolute loss," and consequently becomes "an economy that integrates the renunciation of a calculable remuneration."[64]

With these observations in mind, let us return to Hauke's drowning.

Sacrifice Fulfilled

Having been momentarily immobilized by the sight of the breach in the old wall, Hauke races toward it on his horse:

> […] um ihn schäumte das Meer; aber in ihm lag es wie nächtlicher Friede. Ein unwillkürliches Jauchzen brach aus des Reiters Brust: "Der Hauke-Haiendeich, er soll schon halten; er wird es noch nach hundert Jahren tun!" (751-752)

In the very same instant, almost in response to his hubristic swell of triumph, the dike wall directly in front of him crumbles into the sea and the water redoubles its surging progress inland—"Eine Sündflut war's, um Tier und Menschen zu verschlingen" (752).[65] Then, Hauke sees something that fills him with horror: a small horse-drawn cart descending the hill from his home and making its way toward him, a woman and child inside, unwittingly seconds away from meeting the onrushing torrent:

> …und donnernd stürzte das Meer sich hinterdrein; noch einmal sah er drunten den Kopf des Pferdes, die Räder des Gefährtes aus dem wüsten Gräuel emportauchen und dann quirlend darin untergehen. Die starren Augen des Reiters, der so einsam auf dem Deiche hielt, sahen weiter nichts. "Das Ende!" sprach er leise vor sich hin; dann ritt er an den Abgrund […] Er richtete sich hoch auf und stieß dem Schimmel die Sporen in die Weichen; das Tier bäumte sich, es hätte sich fast überschlagen; aber die Kraft des Mannes drückte es herunter. "Vorwärts!" rief er noch einmal, wie er es so oft zum festen Ritt gerufen hatte: "Herr Gott, nimm mich; verschon die Andern!" (753)

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[64] Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 102, 107.
[65] Cf. Lothar Wittmann, "Der Schimmelreiter," in *Deutsche Novellen des 19. Jahrhunderts: Interpretationen zu Storm und Keller* (Frankfurt am Main: Moritz Diesterweg, 1964), 76-84.

These lines have inspired much scholarly discussion of Hauke's (not to mention Storm's own) religiosity, or lack thereof.[66] The arguments on this count have been varied, but if we restrict our attention to the specific language of Hauke's final utterance it becomes impossible to overlook his plea's invocation of a system in which the divine and the human not only stand in relation to each other, but do so with respect to a shared sense of exchange. In other words, by articulating a wish for God to spare the lives of the villagers in exchange for his own death in the sea, Hauke seems to imply an economy of both human *and* divine deprivation and rectification in which sacrifice performs a decisive function; through self-offering, a debt is supposedly repaid in the same instant that guilt is acknowledged and atoned for.[67]

Yet the question of what precisely this "debt" consists in has also been a topic of debate over the years. Numerous critics have pointed out that Hauke's initial deferral of sacrifice in the scene where he prevents his workers from burying the dog is ironically reversed through his own self-sacrifice at the end.[68] In this instant, from the vantage of the villagers' beliefs, a necessary and previously neglected oblation has finally been

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[66] See, for instance, Christine Geffers Browne, *Theodor Storm: das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Glauben und Aberglauben in seinen Novellen* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), esp. 110-130; Rüdiger Frommholz, "Theodor Storm. Zum Selbstverständnis eines Dichters im Realismus," in *Metamorphosen des Dichters: das Selbstverständnis deutscher Schriftsteller von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Gunter E. Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992), 167-183; Henry U. Gerlach, "Aber'glaube' in Storms *Der Schimmelreiter*?", *Zagreber Germanistiche Beiträge* 5 (1999): 101-117; David A. Jackson, "Storms Stellung zum Christentum und zur christlichen Kirche," in *Theodor Storm und das 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Brian Coghlan and Karl Ernst Laage (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1989), 41-99; and Karl Ernst Laage, *"Wenn ich doch glauben könnte!": Storm und die Religion* (Heide: Boyens Verlag, 2010).

[67] The question of specifically tragic paradigms of guilt and expiation has also generated a significant amount of scholarship on the novella. See John C. Blankenagel, "Tragic Guilt in Storm's *Schimmelreiter*," *The German Quarterly* 25.3 (1952): 170-181; Roy C. Cowen, "Theodor Storm: 'Der Schimmelreiter,'" ibid., 304-315; Christian Demandt, "'Wo keine Götter sind, walten Gespenster': *Der Schimmelreiter*," in *Religion und Religionskritik bei Theodor Storm* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag. 2010), 185-248; Anette Schwarz, "Social Subjects and Tragic Legacies: The Uncanny in Theodor Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Germanic Review* 73.3 (1998): 251-63; and Walter Silz, "Storm, *Der Schimmelreiter*," in *Realism and Reality: Studies in the German Novelle of Poetic Realism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 117-136.

[68] See, in particular, Derek Hillard, "Violence, Ritual, and Community: On Sacrifice in Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* and Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*." *Monatshefte* 101.3 (2009): 370-381, esp. 373; Wolfgang Palaver, "Hauke Haien – ein Sündenbock? Theodor Storms *Der Schimmelreiter* aus der Perspektive der Theorie René Girards," in *Religion – Literatur – Künste: Aspekte eines Vergleichs*, ed. Peter Tschuggnall (Salzburg: Müller-Speiser, 1998), 221-236; Franz Stuckert, "Storms Religiosität," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 19 (1941): 201-202; and Christoph Daniel Weber, "Deichbau und Selbstopfer: der Katastrophendiskurs in Theodor Storms *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 90.1 (2016): 129.

fulfilled. However, in order to arrive at a conclusion about the nature of sacrifice and atonement in Storm's late work, we must attend to how Hauke's drowning stands in relation to his sense of having transgressed against his *own* laws and not merely those of his community's traditions. From this perspective, Hauke's silence about the compromised integrity of the old dike wall is at the core of all the other forms of guilt surrounding the "Sündflut" that impel him to offer up his life in exchange for the lives of others.[69] After all, he not only allowed his pride to intervene in the workers' attempt to puncture his newly constructed dike in order to spare the old one, but he had also kept secret his recognition of the "unheimliche Stelle" and its (ultimately fatal) exposure to the sea. These very thoughts course through Hauke's mind shortly before his death:

> Was hatte er für Schuld vor Gottes Thron zu tragen? – Der Durchstich des neuen Deichs – vielleicht, sie hätten's fertig gebracht, wenn er sein Halt nicht gerufen hätte; aber – es war noch eins, und es schoß ihm heiß zu Herzen, er wußte es nur zu gut – […] Er allein hatte die Schwäche des alten Deichs erkannt; er hätte trotz alledem das neue Werk betreiben müssen: "Herr Gott, ja ich bekenn es," rief er plötzlich laut in den Sturm hinaus, "ich habe meines Amtes schlecht gewartet!" (751)

Moments after making this repentant declaration, however, the sea bursts through the old wall, and Hauke's thoughts suddenly turn instead to the fantasy of his new construction lasting into the next century.

This invites us to interpret Hauke's leap into the sea—which he himself enunciates as an offering to the divine to substitute the lives of his neighbors—not as a "leap of faith" by which he relinquishes reason to divine will,[70] nor merely as a suicidal

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[69] Some critics have taken the Durkheimian position that Hauke's sense of guilt must be understood as socially and societally conditioned. See Winfried Freund, *"Der Schimmelreiter": Glanz und Elend des Bürgers* (Paderborn: Schöninghausen, 1984); Wolfgang Palaver, "Hauke Haien – ein Sündenbock?", 234; and Christian von Zimmermann, "'Ein Haufen neuer Plag' und Arbeit erhob sich vor der Seele des Deichgrafen': zur narrativen Gestaltung moderner Menschenbilder in Storms *Schimmelreiter*," in *Das 19. Jahrhundert und seine Helden: literarische Figurationen des (Post-)Heroischen*, ed. Jesko Reiling (Bielefeld: Aisthesis-Verlag, 2011), 235-262.

[70] Kierkegaard repeatedly asserts that faith is "incommensurable with the whole of reality" (*Fear and Trembling*, 45), and that this fact is crystallized in the act of sacrifice that is performed out of faith whereby the agent believes, embracing the absurd, that the beloved object about to be extinguished will nevertheless be restored to him (ibid., 46). In this regard, a sacrifice of faith is always an immolation of reason itself (ibid., 124). In his *Habilitationsschrift* on Kierkegaard, Adorno fixates upon this paradoxical essence of sacrifice, arguing it to imply a conscious relinquishment of consciousness' own coordinates ("Das Opfer des Bewußtseins wird mit dessen eigenen Kategorien vollzogen: rational"). As Adorno elaborates, "Nicht

act of desperation and guilt couched in the religious apparatus of his time and place.[71] Rather, we must read it as a sacrificial gesture of atonement, though of a very particular kind and in a very particular sense. It is in this regard that Kierkegaard's thoughts about concealment and sacrifice are helpful as a frame of reference, given that the penitential character of Hauke's drowning pertains directly to his prideful silence. There are several forms of sacrifice at work here, and while Hauke's presentation of his own death as an exchange for the lives of others is the most immediate one, we must not forget that this situation was itself precipitated by another sacrifice altogether: namely, his decision to protect his legacy in place of his community by keeping the "unheimliche Stelle" a secret. The drowning is therefore not so much a sacrifice of the self for the sake of others, but a penitential attempt to counterbalance a *prior* sacrifice of others for the sake of the self.

What could possibly qualify as a symmetrical offering to atone for all these deaths in the sea? Hauke settles upon himself, the person who built the dike, and at first glance this seems fitting: a life in return for lost lives. Upon more careful reflection, however, it does not entirely balance out. The flood occurs not so much as a result of Hauke valuing his *life* over his neighbors' lives, but as a result of him valuing the dike—with which the *memory* of his life has been invested—over the safety of the village. We learn that this initial sacrificial exchange is successfully performed, for, as the schoolmaster notes after finishing his tale, "'Der Hauke-Haiendeich steht noch jetzt hundert Jahren,'" embedded in the local landscape and imagination (754). Yet by the same token, Hauke's drowning, insofar as it is intended as an *expiatory* offering, remains sacrificially incommensurate; that is to say, the material cause of the flood that is also the

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der symbolisch-gegenständliche Vollzug des Opfers entscheidet für [Kierkegaard], sondern: daß bei jedem Opfer die Autonomie von Denken gebrochen wird durch Denkbestimmungen […] dann ist den Opfern überall, gleichsam als ihr systematisches Echtheitssiegel, Paradoxie beigegeben." Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 204-206. For a deft consideration of the connections between Storm's novella and Horkheimer and Adorno's conception of sacrifice in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944), see Ian Cooper, "Theodor Storm and Disenchantment," *German Life and Letters* 68.4 (2015): 592-596.

[71] Jackson, *Theodor Storm*, 250.

physical monument to Hauke's memory does not disappear beneath the water. The waves that receive him simultaneously submerge and signify his guilt.

This, then, is the true nature of haunting that his specter evinces: if the original penitential intent had been to extinguish his *person*—but not his memorial—then the symmetrical compensation for this only partial sacrifice is precisely the impossibility of being forgotten. The schoolmaster frames this vividly:

> "[D]enn so ist es, Herr: dem Sokrates gaben sie ein Gift zu trinken und unseren Herrn Christus schlugen sie an das Kreuz! Das geht in den letzten Zeiten nicht mehr so leicht; aber – einen Gewaltsmenschen oder einen bösen stiernackigen Pfaffen zum Heiligen, oder einen tüchtigen Kerl, nur weil er uns um Kopfeslänge überwachsen war, zum Spuk und Nachtgespenst zu machen – das geht noch alle Tage." (754)

Crucially, it is not Hauke's actual death that the schoolmaster phrases in sacrificial terms, but the status of his memory in the collective imagination of the community. If, as I have suggested, Hauke's decision to drown himself constitutes a gesture of atonement for his earlier, transgressive sacrifice, then the schoolmaster implies in turn that his preservation within local legend constitutes an additional sacrifice as well: by being remembered not as a heroic and enlightened ancestor but as a *pharmakos*, he assumes this very role in the form of a "Nachtgespenst" that haunts his physical memorial (the dike wall). And, ironically, it is this sentence to an "afterlife"—that is, to be remembered for his death rather than for his life—that retroactively fulfills the expiatory motivation behind his suicide. Storm's final drowning scene thus points to a fascinating variation on one of his signature themes: while so many of his tales have been about the fragility of memory, his last work communicates the inverse dread not only that certain memories will not fade, but that they may in fact change their form altogether over time by virtue of belonging to the jurisdiction of the living rather than the dead. As such, Hauke's drowning synthesizes the key dimensions of all the works that we have explored in this chapter; I will therefore conclude by briefly reflecting on how this is so.

Conclusion – "Dies Bild ist mir immer von neuem nachgegangen"[72]

Hauke's sacrifice marks the end of his life (and of the innermost frame narrative), but it also returns us to the beginning of the novella and the ghostly spectacle witnessed by the frame narrator. This confluence of both temporal and diegetic frameworks adds one final layer to the drowning: if Hauke's final act is an ethical sacrifice made necessary by past transgression, and one which expresses a wish for the lives of others to be spared, then we can understand the instant of sacrifice, of drowning, as precisely that—an *Augenblick* (or "gefährlichen Moment," to borrow Benjamin's language once again) that is suspended between the past and the future.

We have already observed this facet of the drowning motif in Storm's work, where it has likewise functioned as a singular instant that both opposes the movement of law from the past into the present and also becomes integral to subsequent acts and objects of memorialization. Indeed, it is this precise instant that replays before the eyes of the narrator and is later recapitulated by the schoolmaster. There are therefore two distinct figures of repetition and narrativity associated with Hauke's sacrifice: 1) the spectral trace of his drowning that will be given context retrospectively by the schoolmaster's narration; and 2) the physical sites of the dike, which still stands as Hauke had predicted, and of the sea, which continues to swallow his shadowy form whenever floods threaten the community.[73]

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[72] Storm, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Paul Heyse und Theodor Storm*, 126.

[73] Studies of what the topos of the sea might represent in *Der Schimmelreiter* have tended to offer surprisingly consistent conclusions. William L. Cunningham, Winfried Freund, and Christian Neumann all contend that the sea stands for those subconscious, irrational, and even demonic projections upon nature which the rational, individual subject attempts—but ultimately fails—to maintain control over. In a similar vein, John Hamilton and Andrea Krauss analyze the binary of land/sea in terms of a distinction between the human domain of *techne* and delineation, and the pre-conscious, uncanny domain of infinite and immeasurable forces (Hamilton also extends this duality to the Lacanian distinction between the Symbolic and the Real). See Cunningham, "Zur Rolle des Wassers in Theodor Storms *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Germanic Notes* 13.1 (1982): 2-3; Freund, *Glanz und Elend des Bürgers*, 12-30; Hamilton, "Rahmen, Küsten und Nachhaltigkeiten in Theodor Storms *Der Schimmelreiter*," *Weimarer Beiträge* 61.2 (2015): 165-180; Krauss, "Linienführung: ästhetisches Kalkül in Storms 'Schimmelreiter,'" in *Wirklichkeit und Wahrnehmung* (op. cit.), 149-168; and Neumann, *Zwischen Paradies und ödem Ort: unbewusste Bedeutungsstrukturen in Theodor Storms novellistischem Spätwerk* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 116-120, 129-135.

This duality of spectral trace and material *sema* ultimately points to a duality of memory and memorial that was also at the center of *Aquis Submersus* and *Ein Doppelgänger*.[74] The spatial sites of the dike and the sea remain, but the phantoms of human lives and subjectivities to which these markers silently allude ceaselessly vanish and re-emerge within the imaginations of those who come along after them. Hauke's transgressions of concealment and pride, as well as his sacrificial act of atonement for them, may well live on within communal lore and legend. However, the ghostly materialization of *him*—like the image of Johannes' son and of John Hansen—remains a trace in search of memory. As the narrator remarks at the beginning, had he not seen Hauke's "Schatten" disappear into the sea, one could not know that it had been there at all, for the water is "auffallend unbewegt; der Reiter konnte es nicht getrübt haben; ich sah nichts weiter von ihm" (636). In other words, the subjective instance of Hauke's final moments and the objective shadow of their having been ultimately come to rest on opposite sides of the water's surface.

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Within Storm's writing, drowning in general seems to evince anxiety over whether one will or will not leave behind a trace for others to find, as well as over the question of what the ethical status of this trace would be. Most significant, though, is the thought that just as memory itself relies upon traces that have been left behind, so too do traces in some sense rely upon memory. What seems to occupy Storm's late writing is the intuition that neither can succeed fully, and that while they hold together, they only do so as fragments of one another.

[74] Cf. Roy C. Cowen, who compares the Hauke-Haiendeich with Johannes' portrait of his drowned son in *Aquis Submersus* as a kind of "Vermächtnis" created out of "Schuldgefühl" (Cowen, ibid., 310).

In the late years of his life, Storm became increasingly haunted by his awareness of time.[75] A similar awareness clearly haunts his narratives from this period as well, for each text discussed in this chapter closes in upon the subjective burden of remembrance—a burden not merely of preserving the dead within one's own memory, but also of considering how one will be remembered by others. (There is nothing new in this, of course, but it rings no less true as a consequence; Theodor Fontane, writing in 1853 of the then middle-aged Storm, observes that "[e]r wandelt keine absolut neuen Wege, aber die alten, die er einschlägt, sind die echten und wahren").[76] The urgency behind acts of atonement in the last of Storm's fiction arises from his characters' thoughts of what will be left behind rather than what is still to come, but such acts attain substance only if they are inscribed into space, molded into material traces that can be read and re-read by those who later happen upon them. By contrast, it is the subjective interior of the individuals who actually perform these acts that slowly becomes illegible, left to merge with the markers they have forged into language, image, and nature, with memory trailing in their wake.

[75] Walther Brecht was one of the earliest critics to call attention to this, writing that "Storm ist der Dichter der schwindenden Zeit, ihres Charakters als Vergänglichkeit, deren Anblick ihn mit sanfter oder qualvoller Trauer, mit Melancholie, mit tiefstem Ernste gefaßter Schwermut erfüllt." Subsequent commentators have followed steadily in this vein. Brecht, "Storm und die Geschichte," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 3 (1925): 444-462, here 444; Boll, "Das Problem der Zeit bei Theodor Storm," 54-76; and Karl Ernst Laage, "Das Erinnerungsmotiv in Theodor Storms Novellistik," *Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft* 7 (1958): 17-39.

[76] Fontane, "Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848," in *Sämtliche Werke* Bd. 21.1, ed. Kurt Schreinert (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1963), 31.

Chapter 4

The Bride by the Water: Duty, Procession, and Memorial in Theodor Fontane's *Unwiederbringlich*

> *Under her veil and beyond the river she seemed to me to surpass her former self more than she surpassed other women here, when she was here.*
> —Dante[1]

On 24 September 1887, Theodor Fontane's eldest son, George, died suddenly and painfully of appendicitis. Fontane recorded the unexpected loss in his journal with characteristically stoical concision:

> …am Sonnabend früh um 9 Uhr starb er. Als ich eintrat, war er eben tot. Das Begräbnis war herrlich, 4 Uhr Nachmittag, schönster Herbsttag…Kränze über Kränze…Er liegt nun auf dem Lichterfelder Kirchhof, einem umzäunten Stück Ackerland, und ich wünsche mir die gleiche Stelle.[2]

This remarkable note of candid resolve that sounds out from Fontane's confrontation with death, marked and measured in turn by the appropriate rites of burial and remembrance, also echoes throughout the novel he began to write soon afterwards.[3] First and foremost, however, this tale of conscience, transgression, and regret—appropriately titled *Unwiederbringlich*—chronicles the dissolution of a marriage, and has two principle settings: the secluded home of Count Helmuth Holk and his wife Christine, nestled on the remote Frisian coast, and the bustling court of the Danish

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[1] Ln. 82-84, *Purgatorio* XXXI, in *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri* Vol. 2, ed./trans. Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 535.
[2] Theodor Fontane, *Tagebücher 1866-1882; 1884-1898. Große Brandenburger Ausgabe. Tage- und Reisebücher* Bd. 2, ed. Gotthard Erler (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1994), 239-240.
[3] *Unwiederbringlich* has a rather contested status in the history of Fontane scholarship. The text's most eminent fan was Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, whose praise of its "gewisser poetischer Hauch" is cited and extended in Peter Demetz' early essay in which he elects *Unwiederbringlich* as "das makelloseste Kunstwerk Fontanes…ein Buch ganz aus Elfenbein." Among the more formidable critics who take an opposing view are Georg Lukács and Fritz Martini, both of whom regard the novel (with varying degrees of scholarly investment) as mere "Belletristik." See Demetz, *Formen des Realismus: Theodor Fontane. Kritische Untersuchungen* (München: Hanser, 1964), 165-166; Lukács, *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Francke, 1951), 294-295; Martini, *Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus 1848-1898* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1981), 783. Cf. Sven-Aage Jørgensen, "Fontanes 'Unwiederbringlich' in der Literaturkritik: in, hinter und unter dem Text," *Orbis Litterarum* 57.4 (2002): 293-315.

crown, just across the Baltic waters.[4] While the bulk of the text's action occurs upon the open "stage" of Copenhagen and tracks Holk's political and amorous pursuits, in many respects the deeper drama of the novel takes place at the narrative periphery, unfolding around Christine and the shadowy solitude of the house into which she withdraws in the first section of the story. Her character is often remembered for her introversion and righteousness, traits that are expressions of a deeply rooted piety and adherence to self-imposed laws of moral and spiritual obligation. But then, at the end of the story, Christine seems to flout all of her own laws by drowning herself in the sea overlooked by the family home. Her suicide provokes a question that has long occupied scholars of the novel: what drove her to it, and how is this to be reconciled with her character? Yet an even more crucial question is, how can understanding the logical and symbolic contours of her drowning contribute to a richer interpretation of the text as a whole?

I will address both of these questions by reading Christine's drowning not as an act of despair, as others have, but instead as an act of sacrifice. In order to do so, I focus upon a seldom-explored leitmotif of the story: at several key moments in the plot, one finds sequences in which the imagery of wedding and funeral processions becomes intertwined. Tracing this motif will demonstrate that the trajectory of Christine's character—and indeed of the entire novel—centers upon a particular crisis of passage. Much like the *chiaroscuro* quality of the novel's two settings, Christine's inner world is determined by a moral and spiritual system of duty that rests upon the strict demarcation of categories. In the latter part of the story, however, a contradiction is introduced into this system of duty when, following Holk's adulterous affair and separation from Christine, they subsequently re-marry, allowing the absence of their lost marriage to haunt their renewed state of matrimony from within. Ultimately, I suggest that the

[4] All citations from the text refer to the following edition: Theodor Fontane, *Unwiederbringlich. Große Brandenburger Ausgabe. Das erzählerische Werk* Bd. 13*,* ed. Christine Hehle (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2003). For the editor's chronological overview of George Fontane's death vis-à-vis the drafting of *Unwiederbringlich*, see pp. 329-333.

nuptial and funeral processions do not simply reflect the narrative's membership in the *Ehebruchroman* tradition,[5] but also ritually instantiate a threshold between presence and absence which the second wedding dissolves. As we shall see, the moral underpinnings of this threshold in turn inform both the motivations behind Christine's suicide as well as the particular symbolism of her death in water.

Following this thread will lead us on a brief detour to the roots of wedding and funeral processions in antiquity and their exemplary representation in Euripides' tragedy *Alcestis*. In this Attic drama we will find a striking mirror for *Unwiederbringlich*, for it too revolves around a crisis of passage between life and death that is reflected in the conflated symbolism of the wedding procession and the funeral procession. Bringing this context to Fontane's story—which is set in northern, nineteenth-century variations of the classical *polis* and *oikos* and is thereby lent a tragic sensibility to begin with—will ultimately help us to make sense of Christine's drowning in a new way, namely as a sacrifice that recuperates the conditions for duty to be fulfilled on a collective rather than a merely individual level. Her death in the sea ultimately resolves the crisis of passage that haunts her, allowing a proper boundary to be established once again through the communal recognition of loss.

I.

Polis, *Oikos*, Absence

Unwiederbringlich begins in 1859 in the (then) Danish duchy of Schleswig, five years prior to the second German-Danish War that would eventually incorporate both Schleswig

[5] For readings that contextualize Fontane's novel within (and against) this tradition, see Walter Müller-Seidel, *Theodor Fontane: Soziale Romankunst in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1975), 378-392; Thomas Schröder, "Gebrochene Verhältnisse: Theodor Fontanes Eheromane *Unwiederbringlich* und *Effi Briest* gegenüber Gustave Flauberts *Madame Bovary* und Lew Tolstois *Anna Karenina*," in *Theodor Fontane: Berlin-Brandenburg, Preußen, Deutschland, Europa und die Welt*, ed. Hanna Delf von Wolzogen (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2014), 191-203; and Erzsébet Szabó, "Bedeutungskonstitution in den Ehebruchromanen von Theodor Fontane dargestellt am Beispiel von Fontanes 'Effi Briest' und 'Unwiederbringlich,'" in *Erzählstrukturen: Studien zur Literatur der Jahrhundertwende* Vol 1, ed. Károly Csúri (Szeged: Jate, 1998), 23-35.

and Holstein into a unified province of Prussia.[6] When the narrative begins, Holk and Christine already have many years of happiness behind them, and Holk is in the process of overseeing the construction of a new house on the coast. He is an appointed attendant to the Princess of Denmark and seems in general always to be oriented towards the social and political sphere across the sea, a characteristic that is expressed by the placement and design of the new house, which has been christened Holkenäs, after the family's former residence nearby.

The first paragraph of the novel describes the building's façade: approaching the house from the water, the narrator tells us, one first beholds its recognizably Neoclassical, Palladian architecture (5).[7] The very appearance of the house consciously evokes a contentedly pagan, light-bathed antiquity, and thus serves as a compact metaphor for Holk's moral and aesthetic habitus. This is made clear early on in a conversation between Christine and the pastor Schwarzkoppen, a family friend and frequent guest in the house. Christine complains about Holk's avoidance of any topic or thought relating too closely to mortality or the hereafter, noting that his various building projects do not include replacing the badly rundown family crypt. "'Er denkt nicht gern an Sterben,'" she explains, "'…er denkt nur an den Augenblick und nicht an das, was kommt. Jeglichem, was ihn daran erinnern könnte, geht er aus dem Wege'" (14-15).[8] Schwarzkoppen recalls this observation in a later conversation with Christine's brother

[6] For representative analyses of the novel in terms of its contemporary historical and political contexts—including Fontane's own engagement in both—see Paul Irving Anderson, *Ehrgeiz und Trauer: Fontanes offiziöse Agitation 1859 und ihre Wiederkehr in 'Unwiederbringlich'* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002); Stefan Blessin, "*Unwiederbringlich* – ein historisch-politischer Roman?: Bemerkungen zu Fontanes Symbolkunst," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 48 (1974): 672-703; and Anne-Bitt Gerecke, "Theodor Fontanes *Unwiederbringlich*: das Ende des historischen Romans?" in *Kunstautonomie und literarischer Markt: Konstellationen des Poetischen Realismus*, ed. Heinrich Detering and Gerd Eversberg (Berlin: Schmidt, 2003), 111-122.

[7] Uwe Petersen, "Poesie der Architektur – Architektur der Poesie: Zur Gestaltung und Funktionalisierung eines palladianischen Schauplatzes in Fontanes Roman *Unwiederbringlich*," in *Studien zur deutschen Literatur*, ed. Ulrich Fülleborn and Johannes Krogoll (Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 1979), 246-254.

[8] Cf. Charlotte Jolles, "Unwiederbringlich – der Irrweg des Grafen Holk," in *"Spielende Vertiefung ins Menschliche,"* ed. Monika Hahn (Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 2002), 206.

Arne, remarking that Holk is "'ein Augenblicksmensch und hält zu dem alten Troste: *nach* uns die Sündfluth'" (38, emphasis in the original).

Holk's compulsion to live in the moment by putting out of mind both the past and the future is eventually thrown into a harsh light during the crisis-point of the novel's marital plot. Following his break with Christine, he returns to Copenhagen in order to court Ebba Rosenberg, a young companion of the Princess of Denmark with whom he has fallen in love (and with whom he has already committed adultery). After dismissing Holk's proposal to begin a new life together, Ebba chides him for his fixation upon the present instant. Like a callow imitator of Faust, Holk has failed to realize that

> "…wer den Augenblick verewigen oder gar Rechte daraus herleiten will, Rechte, die, wenn anerkannt, alle besseren, alle wirklichen Rechte...auf den Kopf stellen würden, wer das thut und im selben Augenblicke, wo sein Partner klug genug ist, sich zu besinnen, feierlich auf seinem Scheine besteht...der ist kein Held der Liebe, der ist bloß ihr Don Quixote." (266)

Indeed, it is in a Faustian and Quixotian mode that Holk operates for much of the novel as both an *Augenblicksmensch* and an *Augenmensch*,[9] prone to follow his guileless eye as it lights upon the beautiful and seductive objects that present themselves to him in Copenhagen. For instance, there is the sirenic daughter of his landlady who stands in the light of the hallway, "vielleicht um zu sehen, noch wahrscheinlicher, um gesehen zu werden," and then the fruit laid upon an end table in his room, "mehr wohl um den anheimelnden Eindruck eines Stillebens zu steigern, als um gegessen zu werden" (77-78).

In brief, the things that draw Holk's attention are those whose primary function, at least in his mind, is to be seen in a particular way rather than to serve any concrete purpose of their own. Consequently, while in the Danish capital Holk consistently positions himself so as to enjoy as panoramic a view of his surroundings as possible, frequently moving to windows in idle moments in order to gaze down onto the streets

[9] Petra Zaus, "Harmonie – Unwiederbringlich?: Impressionistische Sprachbilder bei Fontane und Keyserling," in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Sabine Schneider and Helmut Pfotenhauer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), 366.

and scenes below or securing seats in restaurants and parlors that offer the most inclusive vantages. Fittingly, the most prevalent imagery to be found in this central segment of the novel is that of light and entrancement. Christine's declaration shortly before Holk's departure that "'in Kopenhagen ist alles von *dieser* Welt, alles Genuß und Sinnendienst und Rausch'" is externalized in numerous sequences and interactions during his time across the water (32, emphasis in the original). Almost from the moment he arrives in Copenhagen, Holk is overwhelmed by the visual stimulation offered by daily life in the city and at court, a glittering urban proscenium in which Ebba occupies center-stage.[10] All of this sensual detail underscores the significance of the opening passage of the story, in which Holkenäs is described from the vantage point of the sea, i.e., from the figurative perspective of Copenhagen and the milieu in which Holk spends the majority of the plot. That single passage on its own in fact introduces the value that Holk places upon the collective gaze of society, through and by which he simultaneously sees and is seen. Yet it also insinuates that although this gaze possesses considerable force, it nevertheless cannot penetrate beyond the surface-appearance of the objects it seeks out.

On the other side of the sea, meanwhile, Christine remains cloistered from narrative view,[11] moving about in the gloomy stillness of Holkenäs and relying upon her

[10] In her analysis of theatricality in the "Copenhagen section" of the novel, Alexandra Tischel makes the argument, well established in the secondary literature, that Ebba is the "Gegenpol" to Christine, and insofar as she stands "für den gefährlichen, verführerischen, 'künstlichen' Schein, sie ist die Figur der Schauspielerin schlechthin." Tischel, "'Ebba, was soll diese Komödie?': Formen theatraler Inszenierung in Theodor Fontanes Roman *Unwiederbringlich*," in *Inszenierte Welt: Theatralität als Argument literarischer Texte*, ed. Ethel Matala de Mazza and Clemens Pornschlegel (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2003), 185-207, here 196.

[11] A significant component of this division between the narrative foreground and background, which for reasons of space must unfortunately remain unexplored here, is that of epistolarity. Christine's physical absence on the diegetic stage is complemented by her figural "presence" within the medium of the letters she sends to Holk. Frances Subiotto notes that these letters both convey the development of the plot and also structure the story narratologically, as they "displace actual events in the central part of the novel, and become its psychological core" (306). Moreover, she claims that the epistolary element of this phase of the story is what links the realms of the political and the private together (317). The generic tradition of the letter as an object of mediation between an abandoned woman and her absent beloved can be traced back to Ovid's *Heroides*, and while scholars such as Ingrid Mittenzwei, Hubert Ohl, and Petra Zaus have analyzed the theme of linguistic and communicative separation as the decisive element of the novel's *Ehebruchsthematik*, remarkably few readings since Subiotto's have undertaken this interpretive direction with an eye specifically to the epistolary form. See Subiotto, "The Function of Letters in Fontane's

childhood friend Julie Dobschütz for company, whom she has brought into the household in the nebulous post of governess and companion. This early phase of the story foregrounds two key traits that form the basis of Christine's character: a gravitation towards solitude and quiet, on the one hand, and a pious dedication to fulfilling self-imposed laws of moral and spiritual obligation, on the other. I shall first trace Christine's conceptualization of duty, and then consider how this conceptualization initially finds its most concrete expression within her attitude towards loss and mourning. These conjoined themes of duty and absence will reveal themselves to be critical for understanding the scene of Christine's drowning in which both the symbolic framework and the dramatic arc of the plot culminate.

Christine's fervor for the laws of duty is matched only by the ambiguity that surrounds them. The reader never learns what she believes "duty" or "law" specifically to consist in, but only that these categories are as totalizing for Christine as they are opaque to an outside eye. As Jost Schillemeit notes, Christine "kennt nichts Höheres als das Gesetz, unter das sie ihr Leben gestellt hat und das ihr bald 'Pflicht,' bald 'Gebot' und 'Katechismus Lutheri' heißt, und das Leben geht ihr dahin in der mühevollen Erfüllung dieses Gesetzes."[12] There are numerous moments in which Christine's *raison d'être* of acceding to duty comes to the fore. For instance, at one point Schwarzkoppen observes that she "will jeden Augenblick das Beste, das Pflichtmäßige, und diesen ihren Anschauungen von Pflicht eine andere Richtung zu geben, das ist außerordentlich schwer" (41). (In this regard one might say that Christine is also a kind of

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Unwiederbringlich," *Modern Language Review* 65 (1970): 306-318; Mittenzwei, *Die Sprache als Thema: Untersuchungen zu Fontanes Gesellschaftsromanen* (Bad Homburg: Gehlen, 1970), 119-133; Ohl, *Bild und Wirklichkeit. Studien zur Romankunst Raabes und Fontanes* (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm, 1968), 167-179; and Zaus, "Harmonie – Unwiederbringlich?," 363.

[12] Schillemeit, *Theodor Fontane: Geist und Kunst seines Alterswerks* (Zürich: Atlantis, 1961), 66. Cf. Gertrud M. Sakrawa, "Scharmanter Egoismus: Theodor Fontanes 'Unwiederbringlich,'" *Monatshefte* 61.1 (1969): 22; Lieselotte Voss, *Literarische Präfiguration dargestellter Wirklichkeit bei Fontane: zur Zitatstruktur seines Romanwerks* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1985), 45; and Rolf Christian Zimmermann, "Paradies und Verführung in Fontanes 'Unwiederbringlich': Zur Glücksthematik und Schuldproblematik des Romans," in *In Search of the Poetic Real*, ed. John F. Fetzer (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1989), 293.

Augenblicksmensch, though in an entirely opposite sense as Holk). Then, in a later scene, Christine's brother Arne remarks that her myopic commitment to always being on the side of right could potentially summon disaster into her carefully ordered world: "'da muß ich Dir sagen,'" he says,

> "Du überspannst den Bogen, du thust des Guten zu viel."
> "Kann man des Guten zu viel thun?"
> "Gewiß kann man das. Jedes Zuviel ist vom Uebel. Es hat mir, so lang' ich den Satz kenne, den größten Eindruck gemacht, daß die Alten nichts so schätzten, wie das *Maß der Dinge*." (66, emphasis in the original).

Here Arne invokes Plautus' dictum (conveniently addressed to a "sister" as well), "*modus omnibus in rebus, soror, optimum est habitu*," and with it a vision of antiquity akin to the one that finds dilettantish expression in Holk's many "Halbheiten,"[13] which have increasingly become the object of strife between him and Christine.

One such instance occurs as the two are discussing whether the children should be sent to a religious secondary school, and Holk becomes exasperated over Christine's rigid belief in the necessity of stricture and discipline in a child's upbringing. Dismayed at the thought of an empty home, he insists instead that an environment filled with love and instructive examples of good behavior is sufficient for their emotional development. Christine counters by scolding Holk's consideration of his own contentment in the question of their children's education:

> "Es handelt sich, Helmuth, nicht um das, wessen *Du* bedarfst, sondern es handelt sich um das, was die Kinder bedürfen. [...] Du bedarfst der Kinder, sagst Du. Glaubst Du, daß ich ihrer nicht bedarf, hier in dieser Einsamkeit und Stille, darin ich nichts habe, als meine gute Dobschütz? Aber das Glück meiner Kinder gilt mir mehr als mein Behagen, und das, was die Pflicht vorschreibt, frägt nicht nach Wohlbefinden." (45-46, emphasis in the original).

The eldest of their two children, Asta, will reiterate this point when she later recounts how Christine had told her that "man lebt nicht um Vergnügen und Freude willen, sondern man lebt, um seine Pflicht zu thun" (61). It is worth reflecting whether

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[13] Antje Roth, *Halbheiten. Zum Problem der Ambivalenz in Fontanes Roman 'Unwiederbringlich,'* Magister-Arbeit, Universität Göttingen, 1994.

Christine, insofar as she wants "more than *Behagen*" and expresses a contempt for inner ease and well-being, implicitly aligns the sense of gratification she derives from duty with a certain *Unbehagen*. That is to say, the category of her satisfaction resides beyond any "pleasure principle" that might be comprehensible to her brother or husband. This might mean that her very mode of being dutiful is excessive—"des Guten zuviel," as Arne warns her—perhaps even transgressive, but in every event unlivable, as we gradually learn through the course of the novel.

The central place of duty in Christine's relation to both the outside world as well as to her inner world is most directly a reflection of her Pietist faith. Furthermore, as Hartmut Reinhardt has suggested, this particularly stringent Lutheran movement can be linked to Christine's other key traits of silence and introversion.[14] In opposition to Spinozan perspectives that were becoming increasingly fashionable in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Herrnhuter Pietism taught that God cannot be found in nature, and thus that the faithful subject's interior should be sought as a refuge within which the divine might become manifest.[15] In other words, one's inner realm is to be understood as wholly distinct from the external realm of nature and objects, hence introspection and what Reinhardt terms a Pietist "Innerlichkeitskultur"[16] become intrinsic to one's religiosity.

In addition to its clear references to Pietist catechism, the language that Christine uses to describe her own moral system is equally evocative of Kant's moral philosophy, which similarly asserts a "Kultur der Moralität in uns." Consider, for instance, his well-known declaration that

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[14] Reinhardt, "Die Rache der Puritanerin: zur Psychologie des Selbstmords in Fontanes Roman 'Unwiederbringlich,'" in *Fontane und die Fremde, Fontane und Europa*, ed. Konrad Ehlich (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 36-56.
[15] Ibid., 44.
[16] Ibid., 46. Cf. Gerhart von Graevenitz on Fontane's own encounter with Pietism by way of his involvement with the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, in *Theodor Fontane: ängstliche Moderne. Über das Imaginäre* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2014), 59-64, esp. 60.

> Die größte moralische Vollkommenheit des Menschen ist: seine Pflicht zu tun und zwar aus Pflicht (daß das Gesetz nicht bloß die Regel sondern auch die Triebfeder der Handlungen sei).[17]

It is important to emphasize that in this instance Kant does not use the term *Gesetz* to speak of a legalistic category of "external" law, but rather the moral law of man's obligation to duty, which dictates "daß zu allen pflichtmäßigen Handlungen der Gedanke der Pflicht für sich selbst hinreichende Triebfeder sei."[18] Any degrees of resonance and even harmonization of Kant's language with Christine's own need not be overstated, however, and it will suffice on this point simply to recall her unyielding adherence to a non-specific yet all-determining moral and spiritual imperative.[19]

Consequently, Christine's inner world is a tenebrous order of law and quiet that stands in stark contrast with Copenhagen and its surface conventions of social intercourse and courtly *sprezzatura*. In addition to a psychic interiority shaped by the observance of moral and religious duty, Christine also inhabits literal interiors for most of the story. The rooms and corridors of Holkenäs to which she has been relegated correspond to a different kind of inwardness—one connected to the experience of absence—that is neatly demonstrated in a key scene near the beginning of the story.

One evening, Holk and Christine have several guests: Christine's brother Arne, along with the local pastor Petersen and his granddaughter Elisabeth. At one point, Elisabeth and Asta decide to perform a song for the company. As Elisabeth begins to sing, Asta accompanying her on the piano, Christine is suddenly "ergriffen, und als die letzte Strophe gesungen war, erhob sie sich und schritt auf den Flügel zu. Hier nahm sie das noch aufgeschlagene auf dem Notenpult stehende Lied und zog sich ohne weitere

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[17] Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten. Werkausgabe* Bd. VIII, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 523.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Hugo Aust thinks it unlikely that Fontane's writing was decisively influenced by any one philosopher, or by philosophy in general. Although he cites "die rigorose Ethik des Preußentums" as a point of affinity between Fontane and Kant, Aust posits nonetheless that "Fontanes total 'empirische' Natur steht den Anregungen der systematischen, idealistischen und spekulativen Philosophie im Wege, sie ist das spezifische Signum seines Realismus." In *Fontane-Handbuch*, ed. Christian Grawe and Helmuth Nürnberger (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2000), 394.

Verabschiedung aus der Gesellschaft zurück" (34). We soon learn that the song is a setting of Wilhelm Waiblinger's poem "Der Kirchhof" (1829), and the following day Christine discusses the first verse with Dobschütz, which has had the strongest effect upon her. In keeping with the somber atmosphere announced by the song's title, the strophe addresses the vanity of profane, temporal attachments, praising tranquility as the sole good to be sought in a life otherwise laden with weariness and sorrow:

> Die Ruh' ist wohl das Beste
> Von allem Glück der Welt;
> Was bleibt vom Erdenfeste,
> Was bleibt uns unvergällt?
> Die Rose welkt in Schauern,
> Die uns der Frühling giebt;
> Wer haßt, ist zu bedauern
> Und mehr noch fast wer liebt. (54)

Christine at first remarks that she cannot decide whether she finds the beginning or end of the verse to be more beautiful. Eventually, however, she says that to her mind the opening line contains the most truth, and for the remainder of the story Christine's character unfurls in pursuit of the ideal it encapsulates.

The pertinence of this verse is exemplified by Christine's connection to the family crypt, and to one grave in particular: that of her and Holk's deceased third child, Estrid. The role played by Christine's continued attachment to the memory of her son is decisive and emphasized in the text from the very beginning; in the first chapter the reader learns that Christine had initially been reluctant to move into Holkenäs because the original family home was located directly opposite the churchyard. She later explains the significance of this proximity: "'Ich konnte das Kind nicht vergessen und wollte der Stelle nahe sein, wo es liegt'" (9). She appears to have overcome her melancholic attachment to Estrid and successfully completed the work of mourning, however, since when she first views Holkenäs in its completed form she forgets "Alles, was sich auch nach der vorjährigen Aussöhnung mit dem Neubau noch immer wieder von Sorgen und Ahnungen in ihrer Seele geregt hatte" (10).

Nevertheless, it has been argued that Christine's psychic investment with the grave simply gets redistributed amongst the architecture of her life's new setting in Holkenäs, where the "irretrievable past" of her lost child finds manifestation within her desire to build a new mausoleum.[20] As numerous critics have posited, Holk's and Christine's respective "Baupassionen" externalize the divergent modalities of personal fulfillment to which they each subscribe; Holk's Palladian castle by the sea reflects his speciously Epicurean idealization of ease and contentment,[21] whereas Christine's chosen project of replacing the derelict family crypt with a Neo-Gothic plot underscores her Pietist orientation towards the afterlife and an attendant awareness of earthly *vanitas*.[22] In addition to its basic symbolic role as a site of remembrance, then, Estrid's grave also functions as a topos in the classically double sense of being both a location in the physical landscape and a disembodied locus of metaphor that can have multiple dwellings. Renate Böschenstein compellingly argues that traces of the dead child take up residence in the rooms and air of Holkenäs as well as in the silences wedged between the

[20] Patricia Howe, "The Child as Metaphor in the Novels of Fontane," *Oxford German Studies* 10 (1979): 129. The motif of the dead child has also been a common point of reference in critical comparisons of Fontane's novel with Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*. See, for example, Paul Kahl, "Theodor Fontanes *Unwiederbringlich* in der Tradition der *Wahlverwandtschaften*," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 52 (2008): 374-391.

[21] While some critics have been tempted to link Holk's *joie de vivre* and his aversion to the sepulchral to Epicurus, one could argue that his is a false—or at the very least misinformed—Epicureanism. The primary point of misalignment in this regard rests in the question of how happiness is to be attained in the face of mortal finitude. Within Epicurus' philosophical system, the principle of *ataraxia*, translating roughly as "inner tranquility," designated the highest end to be the subject's liberation from worry or care, especially vis-à-vis the prospect of death. However, as Robert Pogue Harrison points out, *ataraxia* did not result from simply avoiding the thought of one's own mortality (as Holk is said to do), but instead from calmly confronting its inevitability and then acknowledging this inevitability's central place in human life. Thus, in a sense, Christine and her Lutheran, Neo-Stoicist model of *Ruhe* are ironically much closer to approaching Epicurus' pre-Christian "tranquility" than Holk is. See Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 74-78. Cf. N. W. DeWitt's classic study of Epicurus (relevant pages cited by Harrison): *Epicurus and his Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 218, 308-322.

[22] Karen Bauer, *Fontanes Frauenfiguren: zur literarischen Gestaltung weiblicher Charaktere im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), 179; Christine Hehle, "Venus und Elisabeth: Beobachtungen zu einigen Bildfeldern in Theodor Fontanes Roman 'Unwiederbringlich,'" in *"Spielende Vertiefung ins Menschliche,"* (op. cit.), 221-222; Cordula Kahrmann, *Idyll im Roman Theodor Fontanes* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1973), 145-146; and Karla Müller, *Schlossgeschichten: Eine Studie zum Romanwerk Theodor Fontanes* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1986), 63.

lives of its inhabitants.[23] This absence thus becomes a felt presence in both space and memory, quietly conveying in the mode of "*et in arcadia ego*" that Holk's constructed idyll of a happy home by the sea is in no way impervious to loss, melancholy, and visitation.

The symbolic importance of the grave for Christine's story is soon made clear. As she and Dobschütz discuss the Waiblinger verse, Asta and Elisabeth go for a walk together and eventually find themselves nearing the crypt. The topic of Asta's deceased brother inevitably arises, and she describes her mother's "'Scheu…[die Gruft] zu betreten,'" save for on the anniversaries of Estrid's birth and death when she ventures out to lay a wreath on his stone (58). Both Holk and Christine are noted at various points to avoid the gravesite, but while Christine ascribes Holk's reticence to his overarching distaste for anything related to finitude, her own reasons are not articulated explicitly. Nevertheless, this reticence alone suggests noteworthy implications for her character when read alongside her desire to have a new mausoleum built. Though this desire is most immediately driven by the current crypt's state of disrepair, as Christine has already explained to Schwarzkoppen, it also seems tied to a deeper sense of necessity generated by the delicate relation between her grief and her conception of duty.

According to a Pietist (or more broadly Lutheran) standpoint, individuals, creatures, or states of being that pass away should be mourned and duly accepted as gone so that the pious subject can turn her or his thoughts to heaven, salvation, and eternity.[24] The hazard of not completing this transition from lamentation to consolation in a timely manner lies in the possibility of the dead retaining a hold over one's heart and anchoring it within the earthly sphere of anguish and bereavement. The decrepit ruin of the crypt is

[23] Böschenstein, "Idyllischer Todesraum und agrarische Utopie: zwei Gestaltungsformen des Idyllischen in der erzählenden Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Idylle und Modernisierung in der europäischen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hans Ulrich Seeber and Paul Gerhard Klussmann (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986), 25-40, here 27.
[24] On the theological and socio-historical background of this doctrinal outlook, see Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany: 1450-1700* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000); Martin Treu, "Die Bedeutung der consolatio für Luthers Seelsorge bis 1525," *Lutherjahrbuch* 53 (1986): 7-25; and Eberhardt Winkler, *Die Leichenpredigt im deutschen Luthertum bis Spener* (Munich: Kaiser, 1967).

an apt metaphor for this perceived danger, for its fragmentariness evokes precisely the absence of what has been lost rather than the future plenitude of the afterlife. If viewed in this light, Christine's wish to put an austere mausoleum in place of the crumbling grave does not merely reflect a certain aesthetic disposition, but also implies a deeper, duty-bound commitment to presence and absence being kept *psychically* distinct by being *physically* emphasized as such. The chief aim of demarcating presence and absence so thoroughly—i.e., symbolically as well as architecturally—is to eliminate the risk of their coalescence within melancholy or, worse yet, superstition.[25]

As we shall see in due course, Christine's moral paradigm of demarcation is usurped in the last section of the novel by one in which the boundaries between presence and loss become blurred. Before examining how this comes about, however, we must look more closely at the ways in which her preferred order is depicted elsewhere in the plot. Specifically, I will trace motifs of nuptial and funeral procession that are interwoven throughout the narrative. Doing so will reveal clues for understanding Christine's suicidal drowning at the end of the story as a sacrificial act that aims to restore the conditions for an order in which duty and demarcation are intact, and thereby to attain what she longs for most—peace.

II.

As has already become clear, burial and mortality are prevalent themes in *Unwiederbringlich*. However, it is in the scene just before Christine exits the narrative stage that the leitmotif of particular interest to us here is introduced. Chapter IX begins with

[25] Though falling well beyond the purview of this chapter, the resonances between Reformation teachings against excessive grief and Sigmund Freud's seminal investigation of mourning and melancholy (1917) should not go unmentioned. For the early-modern Protestant, fixating upon the loss of a loved one could lead to the temptation to backslide into a Catholic belief in fluid boundaries between the living and the dead, while the modern subject who fails to undertake *Trauerarbeit* runs the risk of introjecting the loss of the object. In both models, absence insinuates itself into presence, with deleterious results for the soul, on the one hand, and the ego, on the other. See Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead*, 1-15, 88-107; and Freud, "Trauer und Melancholie," in *Studienausgabe* Bd. 3, ed. Alexander Mitserlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1975), 193-212.

Holk embarking upon his journey to Copenhagen; he climbs aboard the steam ship from the landing dock that stretches out from the shore below Holkenäs, and Christine and Dobschütz watch from the terrace as the vessel casts off and slowly disappears into the horizon. Christine then tells Dobschütz that she has been plagued by an "'unbestimmte Angst'" ever since awaking from a dream the night before (71). Though she makes a point of affirming her belief that divination and the interpretation of dreams are "'gottlos'" and "'eine Quelle der Trübsal,'" she nevertheless continues:

> "Und war nicht einmal ein schrecklicher Traum, bloß ein trüber und schwermüthiger. Ein Trauerzug war es, nur ich und Du, und in der Ferne Holk. Und mit einem Male war es ein Hochzeitszug, in dem ich ging, und dann war es wieder ein Trauerzug. Ich kann das Bild nicht loswerden. Dabei das Sonderbare, solange der Traum dauerte, hab' ich mich nicht geängstigt, und erst als ich wach wurde, kam die Angst." (71-72)

Several aspects of this passage should be highlighted, beginning with the fear which Christine first experiences not in sleep or half-consciousness, as one might expect, but rather in the light of day, reality, and wakefulness—in other words, in the matinal realm usually proper to *relief* from nocturnal terrors. Although she asserts that she puts no stock in soothsaying and augury, she is nonetheless driven to relate her dream out of an obscure anxiety that has already taken root in her. She cannot occlude superstition and what she regards as its godless capacity to cloud the pious psyche simply by banishing an unsettling dream from her thoughts. On the contrary, her waking experience has already been infiltrated by oneiric premonition precisely as a consequence of awaking in the first place. In contrast with the "burning child" episode that Freud would recount several years later in his *Traumdeutung* (1900), Fontane's text links the menacing nature of nightmares not so much to an immediate reality of the sleeper's present, but instead to the process of recollection that only comes with wakefulness.[26] From Christine's

[26] Christine's views in this respect appear to have sharpened with time, as evidenced by an exchange that takes place between her and Holk at the beginning of the novel, when the plan to build a new family home is first under discussion. "'…[I]ch bekenne Dir offen,'" she tells him, "'ich bliebe lieber hier unten in dem alten Steinhause mit seinen Unbequemlichkeiten und seinem Spuk. Der Spuk bedeutet mir nichts, aber an Ahnungen glaub' ich, wiewohl die Herrnhuter auch davon nichts wissen wollen und werden wohl auch

perspective, the spiritual danger of mulling over one's dreams is the same as that of immoderate mourning, for in both, memory assumes the power to inflect the present tense of consciousness with past or, in this case, potentially future "Trübsal" that should more properly be left up to divine will.

A second aspect that will be discussed in greater detail below is the specific content of the dream, which centers upon a dual symbolism of departure and return, on the one hand, and repetition and transformation, on the other. The salience of these motifs for Fontane's text has already been conveyed by the fact that Christine not only recapitulates her dream at the very instant that Holk departs for Copenhagen, but also that she does so immediately before herself exiting the narrative frame. As we shall see, Christine's departure from—and her eventual return to—the *skene* of the text lays a path for the gradual procession of the narrative action, one that leads directly to the theatrical function of nuptial and funeral rituals as choreographed managements of absence and presence. Before exploring the structural and thematic contours of these motifs in more detail, however, let us first consider another manifestation of them in the story.

"Vor demselben Altar, auf selbem Stein"

The next place that they make an appearance is across the sea, in the bleak countryside outside of Copenhagen. As Holk's infatuation with Ebba is nearing its peak, the Princess and her circle of attendants set off for an extended stay at the castle of Frederiksborg. As the company makes its way northward by rail, a sense of impending crisis is exuded by the lusterless and harrowed landscape of Hovedstaden; at one point Ebba peers out of the window of the train car she is sharing with the Princess and Holk, exclaiming:

> "Alles wirkt so geheimnißvoll, als berge jeder Fußbreit Erde eine Geschichte oder ein Geheimniß. Alles ist wie Opferstätte, gewesene, oder vielleicht auch noch gegenwärtige, und die Wolken, die so grotesk drüber hinzieh'n, – es ist, als wüßten sie von dem Allen." (165)

Recht damit haben. Trotzdem, man steckt nun 'mal in seiner menschlichen Schwachheit, und so bleibt einem manches im Gemüth, was man mit dem besten Spruche nicht los werden kann'" (8).

The fact that Frederiksborg will serve as the setting for Holk's adultery, and thus also as the setting for the realization of Christine's "unbestimmte Angst," is first foreshadowed by the landscape itself. The hollow spaces and desolate terrain of the heath seem to brim with secrecy and old sites of concealment, burial, and sacrifice, and as such it suggests itself as a counterpart to the interior of Holk's own home, where Christine is sequestered.

All of this earthen foreboding is amplified in a noteworthy sequence that has received surprisingly little attention from critics. On the morning after his first night in the castle, Holk receives a curious letter from a close acquaintance of the Princess, a pastor by the name of Schleppegrell who lives in the neighboring village. The previous evening, Schleppegrell had regaled the company with accounts of the sixteenth-century Danish naval captain Herluf Trolle, and Holk's expressed interest in the events and deeds surrounding the national hero has prompted Schleppegrell to send a translated fragment of a ballad depicting the warrior's burial. The verses which Holk now reads describe how, following his death from injuries sustained in a skirmish with the opposing Swedish fleet, Trolle's body was brought home to his wife Brigitte. The fragment details the encounter between the cortege, made up of Trolle's fellow seamen, and Brigitte, in which they deliberate over where the remains should be laid to rest. A pallbearer steps forward, listing potential sites at churches and burial grounds from the surrounding kingdom, before addressing Brigitte: "'Sage, Herrin, wohin wir ihn stell'n, / Eine Ruhstätt' für ihn hat jede'" (184). He continues, affirming how a warrior of Trolle's renown would be welcomed and given a hero's burial anywhere in the land, but Brigitte interjects:

> Da sprach Brigitte: "*Hier* soll es sein,
> *Hier* wollen wir ihn bestatten.
>
> Wohl hat er hier keine Kirche gebaut
> – Die stand schon viel hundert Jahre –

Hier aber, als Herluf Trolles Braut,
Stand ich mit ihm am Altare.

Vor demselben Altar, auf selbem Stein,
Steh' er wieder in aller Stille,
Nichts soll dabei gesprochen sein,
Als, Herr, es geschehe Dein Wille." (Ibid.)

These lines are clearly redolent of Christine's dream from Chapter 9 in multiple ways, the most pronounced being the seamless interlacing of the rites of marriage and interment within a single ceremonial procession. On a deeper level, however, one also finds two structural aspects of Schleppegrell's ballad that will further illuminate the motivic significance of Christine's dream for the story overall: 1) the framing pattern of departure and return, and 2) the symbolic processes of repetition and transformation integral to this pattern.

The fragment begins *in medias res*, specifically in the midst of a return from the world-political stage of war, nationality, and legendary personae to the private realm of the home, marital love, and mortal repose. The pallbearer recounts this procession, beginning at the scene of the sea battle in which Trolle was fatally wounded. The subsequent litany of potential burial sites then names the corners of the Danish kingdom where Trolle could be received and apotheosized. Brigitte, however, decrees that her husband should be buried not in the glow of political and military history, but instead in the shade of a specific moment in the private history of two individuals, on the very spot where they were first married, "Vor demselben Altar, auf selbem Stein."

Brigitte's speech not only marks a transitional procession between the realms of *polis* and *oikos*, as well as between marriage and burial, but more crucially coincides with a second process inherent to this transition: namely, that of simultaneous repetition and transformation. The return of the hero's body to his home and spouse occasions an additional kind of return insofar as it has been brought to the very location at which Trolle and Brigitte were first ceremonially joined. Now, however, this site also serves as

the place where husband and wife are ceremonially parted in the physical world. The fused symbolism of return and departure that is implicit in the rites of nuptial union and burial is literalized in space: "'*Hier* wollen wir ihn bestatten […] Hier…stand ich mit ihm am Altare.'" The repetition that is implicit to human remains being brought back home is thus closely linked to the notion of an ontological metamorphosis that comes with departure. For in the same sense that Brigitte and Trolle's past has been spatially reiterated, so too has Trolle in this instant ceased to be the man Brigitte wed at the altar, and become instead the body that will be buried beneath it.

The Bride, the Grave, and the God

The central logic of Christine's dream and the ballad thus centers upon a dialectic of repetition and transformation, on the one hand, and of life and death, on the other. The relation between these two dialectics and the conflation of wedding and burial imagery in the foregoing two scenes invokes a particular symbolism of procession that will be crucial for making sense of Christine's suicide. Unsurprisingly, classical antiquity proves the most fruitful place to look for the origins and poetic implications of the ceremonial processions depicted in Fontane's narrative.

The intertwinement of nuptial and funeral topoi can be traced to ancient Greek practices of marriage and interment, and, as a matter of fact, the sacramental value of these processions seems to have derived as much from their mutual resemblance as from their respective symbolic objectives. Though the two practices mirrored each other in numerous ways, the focal point of their similarity was a basic opposition of departure and arrival.[27] In essence, both ceremonies thematized the separation of an individual from a former community, whether the biological family of the betrothed or those mourning the recently deceased. The processions oversaw and enacted the transition

[27] Richard Seaford, "The Tragic Wedding," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 107 (1987): 109.

from these old contexts of existence into new ones: the bride leaves the household of her parents and, following the rite of marriage, is brought into the house of her bridegroom, just as the one who has died is excised from the circle of family, friends, and neighbors in order to be laid to rest in a new "abode." Consequently, the presence of certain gestures and procedures in both rites is rooted within the shared mechanism of exiting one sphere of being and entering a new one. The marriage ceremony turns upon the transitional "giving away" of the bride to her spouse (*ekdosis*), while the funeral procession is structured around the "carrying out" of the body for burial (*ekphora*).[28] Similarly, the wedding procession takes place between the key moments in which the bride leaves the parental home (*exagoge*) before being led into the home of her husband (*eisagoge*).[29]

In brief, the two rituals converged above all within a liminal zone of transition. This zone is important for our reading of *Unwiederbringlich*, for it houses the two essential moments of repetition and transformation introduced by Christine's dream and later developed in Schleppegrell's ballad. To begin with, one immediately notices how iteration is just as central to these rites as it is to the sequences from Fontane's novel that evoke them. Due to the symmetrical arrivals and departures that traditionally occur in both processions, a funeral by default "repeats" nuptial motifs to the same degree that a wedding prefigures the burial that will also one day be carried out for the newlyweds. Moreover, in both one also finds a recurrence of crossed thresholds; the exit from one abode is automatically echoed within the subsequent entrance into a new one (whether for the living or for the dead).

Secondly, these instances of repetition are also concomitant with transformations, for both the bride and the corpse undergo meaningful recontextualization in the interim

[28] Rush Rehm, *Marriage to Death: The Conflation of Wedding and Funeral Rituals in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 11, 28.
[29] Ibid., 14.

between their respective departures and arrivals. For the bride, the *exagoge* (or "carrying out") from her childhood home and the *eisagoge* (or "carrying in") to her adult home correspond with a transition from her identity as a virgin and a daughter to her adult status as a woman and a wife. Likewise, for the deceased, the *ekphora* corresponds with changing from a living member of a family or a city into an ancestor who belongs to the community of the dead. What will be of foremost importance for our considerations of Fontane's novel is the fact that Greek tragedy portrayed these two symbolic frameworks to be linked by a common, key element: sacrifice.[30]

No surviving work of ancient literature depicts this coalescence of sacrificial, marital, and funereal themes more strikingly than Euripides' *Alcestis*. First performed at the Athens Dionysia of 438 B.C., the play's main action is structured around an *ekphora* and *eisagoge*,[31] occurring within a narrow sliver of time and space positioned between the self-sacrifice and burial of the eponymous protagonist and her subsequent, miraculous return to life (and to the stage) in a "second marriage" to her mourning husband, Admetus. Let me note parenthetically, however, that by making this comparison I do not mean to suggest that Fontane drew direct or conscious influence from Euripides, but rather that the tragedy reveals itself as a *locus classicus* of the leitmotif I am tracing in the novel—namely, the interlacing of wedding and funeral processions.[32] By setting *Alcestis*

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[30] As Helen Foley has argued, antique nuptial and funerary practices were united with sacrifice by a common objective of incorporating the individual into the communal body, whether by way of entry into a new familial structure or into collective memory as an object of mourning and remembrance. See Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 36. Also see Elise P. Garrison, *Groaning Tears: Ethical and Dramatic Aspects of Suicide in Greek Tragedy* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1-34.

[31] Rehm, *Marriage to Death*, 84.

[32] While I do not mean to imply that Fontane knowingly drew upon this text, it is by no means implausible that he had the tragedy-genre in mind. Among his numerous entries in the *Causerien über Theater*, for instance, there is a short article on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* from 20 September 1873. In it, Fontane exclaims over the play's intrinsic "Tendenz" of fate as opposed to guilt, the latter of which he designates as a commonplace of the contemporary "Schuldtragödie" that ultimately diminishes its cathartic effect in comparison with the ancient model. The reasons he gives for this are interesting with respect to our discussion of Christine's dedication to an inner system of moral and spiritual law: "Die Schuldtragödie dient dem Sittlichen, indem sie das Gesetz des Sittlichen in dem sich Vollziehenden proklamiert […] Aber das Größte und Gewaltigste liegt in diesem tragischen Gange von Ursache und Wirkung *nicht* beschlossen […] Das unerbittliche Gesetz, das von Uranfang an unsre Schicksale vorgezeichnet hat, das nur Unterwerfung und kein Erbarmen kennt und neben dem unsere 'sittliche Weltordnung' wie eine

alongside Fontane's novel we not only can compare the structural function of this leitmotif in both texts, but can also see how its imagery pertains directly to the acts of self-sacrifice carried out by the respective protagonists.

Before moving further, a brief summary of the plot is called for. Years before the action of the play, Apollo had rewarded King Admetus' hospitality with the opportunity to cheat death, but with a grim caveat: in order for Admetus to be allowed to survive beyond his ordained time on earth, another would have to take his place. None but his loyal wife Alcestis was willing to do so. The play begins on the day of her death, and Alcestis, owing to her unique foreknowledge, has begun to personally carry out the rites of mourning usually performed by the survivors of the deceased.[33] She at last expires in the embrace of her spouse and children, though not before having Admetus swear to repay her sacrifice by not taking a new wife. As preparations are being made for her burial, Hercules arrives, and Admetus, not able to bring himself to overlook the customary obligations of friendship and hospitality, welcomes him as a guest. He then leads the *ekphora* offstage to bury Alcestis, and a servant eventually shares the doleful circumstances of the household with Hercules. Moved, Hercules decides to restore Alcestis to his host and sets out to wrest her from the underworld. Some time after Admetus has returned home from the burial, Hercules re-enters, leading a veiled woman behind him. He tries to persuade Admetus to take the silent figure inside the house, but Admetus resists, remembering his oath to Alcestis. Hercules at last wears down his resolve, however, and when the veil is lifted, Admetus gazes in astonishment at his wife, returned to him from the grave. Yet Alcestis remains silent; Admetus inquires as to why she is not sharing in his joy at being reunited, and Hercules explains that she will not be

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kleinbürgerliche, in Zeitlichkeit befangene Anschauung besteht, dies unerbittliche…Gesetz, *das ist* es, was die Seele am tiefsten fassen muß […]" Fontane, *Causerien über Theater. Erster Teil*, in *Sämtliche Werke* Bd. 22.1, ed. Edgar Gross (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1964), 292-293 (emphases in the original).

[33] Rehm 85.

able to speak for three days, until she has been "purified in the sight of the nether gods."[34] He then departs, and the play concludes.

How might the main events of *Alcestis* enrich our understanding of Fontane's novel, and especially Christine's share of the narrative? It has been well established in the secondary literature that the plot of *Unwiederbringlich* evokes numerous theatrical—and specifically tragic—conventions, yet its particular affinities with Euripides' drama have not yet been explored.[35] To begin with, however, we should observe a crucial point of difference between the two texts that serves nonetheless as a helpful guide for our inquiry: Alcestis allows herself to die out of love for a single individual (her spouse) and returns from the dead. By contrast, it is after Holk's marital betrayal that Christine will drown herself for the sake of a communal process that is predicated upon her remaining apart from the living. As we shall see, precisely this difference in sacrificial motivation is what makes Christine's death a logical—rather than incomprehensible, as some have argued[36]—endpoint of her trajectory.

Furthermore, the action of Euripides' tragedy is built around Alcestis' removal to the offstage space of burial and her return to the stage as a veiled, "new" bride. Consequently, the primary content of the play is borne along by the same two processions that Christine's dream introduced just before her own exit from the narrative stage, thereby suggesting an intriguing parallel between both protagonists. Because the antique wedding and funeral ceremonies symbolically enact the demarcation of—via passage between—presence and absence, they evince Christine's moral and spiritual framework to the same degree that they spatially trace the consequences of Alcestis' sacrifice.

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[34] Ln. 1145, in *Cyclops. Alcestis. Medea*, ed./trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 279.
[35] On the resonances between *Unwiederbringlich* and various 'Tragödienmuster' of the nineteenth century, especially as found in Hebbel's *Herodes und Mariamne* (1850), see Reinhardt, "Die Rache der Puritanerin," 47-53. Cf. Tischel, Formen theatraler Inszenierung in Theodor Fontanes Roman *Unwiederbringlich*," ibid.
[36] See note 53.

Another, more complex way in which *Alcestis* offers us a clue for reading Fontane's novel has to do with the culmination of these two processional movements, the first of which involves a deceased wife being taken from the house to the grave (a doubled *exagoge* and *ekphora*), and the second that comprises her return from the realm of the dead to the home in a resurrective *eisagoge*. In his theory of tragedy, Friedrich Nietzsche designates this moment of re-entrance from the *obskene* as the climax of what he terms "das dramatische Urphänomen."[37] This discussion occurs in Chapter VIII of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1878), as Nietzsche is developing the thesis that the primary dramatic mechanism of Attic tragedy is not Aristotle's catharsis of purged emotion arising from the spectator's fearful and pitying identification with the tragic hero, but rather a state of "Verzauberung" in which the living viewer is stripped of selfhood altogether and becomes one with the dithyrambic chorus of Bacchic celebrants.[38]

The climax of this merging takes place when the Satyr-spectator "sieht in seiner Verwandlung eine neue Vision ausser sich," a vision whose focal point is, according to Nietzsche, always implicitly the god Dionysus as he undergoes his ordeals and eventual apotheosis onstage.[39] So ecstatic has the amplitude of the audience's Dionysian *Stimmung* become over the course of the spectacle that at the moment of the tragic hero's appearance onstage, the viewers do not merely behold the masked actor,

> sondern eine gleichsam aus ihrer eignen Verzückung geborene Visionsgestalt. Denken wir uns Admet mit tiefem Sinnen seiner jüngst abgeschiedenen Gattin Alcestis gedenkend und ganz im geistigen Anschauen derselben sich verzehrend – wie ihm nun plötzlich ein ähnlich gestaltetes, ähnlich schreitendes Frauenbild in Verhüllung entgegengeführt wird: denken wir uns seine plötzliche zitternde Unruhe, sein stürmisches Vergleichen, seine instinctive Ueberzeugung – so haben wir ein Analogon zu der Empfindung, mit der der dionysisch erregte Zuschauer den Gott auf der Bühne heranschreiten sah, mit dessen Leiden er bereits eins geworden ist.[40]

[37] Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie / Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen. Kritische Studienausgabe* Bd. 1, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 61.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 62-63.
[40] Ibid., 63-64.

The apex of the god's entrance is thus rooted in a dual process of return and metamorphosis, as exemplified by Alcestis' re-entrance from the *obskene* realm of death and burial as a restored bride. In Nietzsche's terms, Alcestis' return is a repetition of presence on the physical level, insofar as the persona that had been there before comes back again. However, on the psycho-subjective level of spectatorship, it is also a transformation of the hero into the god *within* the enraptured gaze of the audience members.

Nietzsche likely selected Euripides' tragedy in order to illustrate this metatheatrical moment not only because the play's staging physically instances it, but also because the staged action dramatically represents it. Just as the tragic hero comes forth as Dionysus, so too does Alcestis, in the instant of her unveiling, appear to change before Admetus' awestruck eyes from a stranger who substitutes his beloved into a re-materialization *of* her. And, as Nietzsche emphasizes, the drama of this climactic moment is not restricted to the actual object of repetition and transformation—i.e., the silent figure of Alcestis, or the masked actor portraying her onstage—but also occurs for the *subject* who attends and observes this process. It is the community of spectators, just like the mournful Admetus, who are truly changed by the metamorphosis that takes place before them.[41] In this way, Nietzsche's dramatic "Urphänomen" shares in an ancient poetics of procession, whereby the newly wed or the recently deceased are able to become wholly so by being recognized as such by a particular community of celebrants and onlookers.

As we have seen, the antique symbolism of wedding and funeral ceremonies concerns a dichotomy that recrudesces in Christine's moral and spiritual framework. Both processions ultimately converge around a central instant that signals the

[41] "Dieser Prozess des Tragödienchors ist das *dramatische* Urphänomen: sich selbst vor sich verwandelt zu sehen und jetzt zu handeln, als ob man wirklich in einen andern Leib, in einen andern Charakter eingegangen wäre…hier ist bereits ein Aufgeben des Individuums durch Einkehr in eine fremde Natur" (ibid., 61. Emphasis in the original).

demarcation of social and ontological categories that on the most essential level relate to states of life (or presence) and death (or absence). Euripides' *Alcestis* communicates this thought using the symbolism of mourning and marital (re)union, for once Alcestis has physically left the stage, she is, from the perspective of those who survive her, metaphysically gone as well. In turn, after Alcestis physically returns to the scene, Admetus sees his living wife reappear before him in a dramatic unveiling.[42] Yet despite these clear boundaries, a short sequence near the beginning of the play also reveals a troubling middle space in which Alcestis performs mourning rites *for herself*. A house servant describes her in this moment as "'both living and dead,'" terms which convey an unnaturalness in lingering too long between these ceremonial stations, whether literally or symbolically.

To briefly summarize this detour into ancient Greek ritual and its depiction in Euripides' *Alcestis*, we could say that wedding and burial processions ultimately underscore the importance of transition from one sphere of being to another (from childhood into adulthood, from life into death). Consequently, the nuptial procession consisting of *exagoge*, *ekdosis*, and *eisagoge* shared a common function with the funeral procession, or *ekphora*: namely, to solidify the demarcation of these spheres by ritually enacting a traversal of their thresholds. It is symbolic functions such as these that will be most relevant to our analysis of the second half of *Unwiederbringlich*, to which we now return.

[42] In antique art and literature, the topos of the touched veil (*anakalypsis*) is one of the most prominent representations of return as well as of departure. It typically depicts the act either of unveiling as a gesture of welcome, or conversely of veiling as one of farewell. However, as Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones suggests, the visual grammar of the "*anakalypsis*-gesture" can often be ambiguous, leaving room for uncertainty as to whether particular scenes of (un)veiling are meant to represent the end of a journey or the beginning of one. This semantic doubling carries particular weight with regard to the wedding ceremony—and by virtue of our current discussion, to the climax of *Alcestis*—given that veiling *and* unveiling constitute crucial moments in the bride's processional transformation. See Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2003), 85-114, 219-248.

III.

Exagoge and *Ekphora*

Just before Christmas, Holk, having resolved to end his marriage and pursue happiness with Ebba, returns home. For the first time since his departure in Chapter IX, Christine and the interior of Holkenäs are brought before the reader. Speaking directly to Holk's as-yet unarticulated desire for divorce, Christine remarks placidly, "'Ja, ich hab' es so gewollt, denn ich bin nicht für halbe Verhältnisse…ich will einen ganzen Mann und ein ganzes Herz…Also sprich es aus, daß Du gekommen bist, um mit mir von Trennung zu sprechen'" (253). In the conversation that follows, Holk's valorization of contentment confronts Christine's inner bastion of moral imperative. Both sides in a sense seem to win out in the end: Holk is freed of his marital bonds, but not before Christine leaves him with the final, portentous words: "nun lebe wohl und werde nicht zu hart gestraft für diese Stunde" (ibid.).

Holk immediately returns to Copenhagen in order to make official what he believes to be the *fait accompli* of securing Ebba's hand, only to have his proposal rejected and derided. With his political reputation in Denmark soiled and his marriage dissolved, he then embarks upon a sullen journey through Europe. Several years pass, and he eventually settles in London. His partially self-imposed exile is leavened only through an ongoing correspondence with Arne, who encourages him not to abandon all hope of future reconciliation with Christine.

In one such letter, Arne describes his sister as being locked in an internal struggle in which her "'immer lebendige Liebe'" for Holk remains in stalemate with the thought of forgiving him (278). However, as Arne opines, "'was ihre Liebe vielleicht nicht vermöchte, dazu wird sie sich, wenn Alles erst in die rechten Hände gelegt ist, durch ihre Vorstellung von Pflicht gedrängt fühlen'" (ibid.). He explains that the "rechten Hände" in question are those of Christine's two closest mentors and spiritual advisors,

Schwarzkoppen and Petersen, who have been attempting to shape and color her interpretation of duty in the hope that she will eventually overrule her own objections to reconciliation with Holk. Though both pastors have thus far failed to wholly sway Christine's perception of what exactly *Pflichterfüllung* would entail in this particular situation, Arne predicts that her resistance will soon flag. After all, she now lives in near isolation, avoiding all people and places (with the exception of Dobschütz) that awaken any painful memories, a condition which can only be sustained for so long: "…ich getröste mich, daß das Bedürfniß nach dieser Weltabgeschiedenheit in ihr hinschwinden soll, und daß wir sie recht bald in die Welt und in ein neues altes Glück zurückkehren sehen" (279).

Arne's letter outlines the crisis to which the narrative has been gradually leading up, one born from Christine's struggle to reconcile her laws of duty with the human vulnerability to memory—to the possibility that one's recollection of a past and departed happiness can too easily transform into the immoderate desire for this past to be repeated. And, indeed, this is precisely what appears to happen. The subsequent chapter leaps forward in time and opens upon Holkenäs, its Palladian façade bathed in the bright June sunlight of a St. John's Day and bedecked with roses and a wreath. As noon is tolled, the vision presaged by Christine's dream comes to life. A line of family-members and acquaintances forms behind Holk and Christine, and the procession sets out from the house and winds its way toward the church in the nearby village of Holkebye, where the couple's re-marriage is to take place. Local farmers' daughters strew flowers before the cortege, and several of them rush forward to Christine, kissing her hand and the hem of her wedding dress:

> "Sie machen eine Heilige aus mir," sagte die Gräfin und suchte zu lächeln; aber Holk, dem sie die Worte zugeflüstert hatte, sah wohl, daß ihr dies Alles mehr Pein als Freude schuf, und daß sie, wie das in ihrer Natur lag, ängstlich schmerzliche Betrachtungen oder vielleicht selbst trübe Zukunftsgedanken an dies Uebermaß von Huldigung knüpfte. (281)

As if to spite Christine's previously observed reticence towards superstitious behaviors such as divination, the wedding procession then enacts the omen from her dream which she had refrained from interpreting for Dobschütz. Just as the festive atmosphere and the ringing of celebratory bells begins to lift Christine's spirits, the assembly reaches the outer walls of the churchyard, and turns "in das Portal ein und bewegte sich, zwischen Gräber hin, auf die Kirche zu..." (282).

On a basic level, this sequence performs the ancient ceremonial "leading out" (*exagoge*) of the bride-to-be from her former home and towards her future one (although in Christine's case, these are one and the same). However, two additional points should also be mentioned. First, the procession brims with multiple senses of repetition, for aside from the mundane fact that it constitutes a second wedding, there are also implicit echoes and explicit reiterations of previous scenes, most significantly Christine's dream, but also Asta and Elisabeth's visit to this same churchyard, as well as Schleppegrell's ballad fragment which Holk read at Frederiksborg. This broaches the second noteworthy aspect of the wedding procession, for in accordance with the origins of the tropes at the heart of the dream and the ballad, Christine' *exagoge* leads directly into the cemetery and through the gravestones, and thus simultaneously resembles the "carrying out" of a body from its former abode to its burial site (*ekphora*). It is significant that the procession commences at the stroke of twelve on midsummer's day, for these combined temporal thresholds, one diurnal and one seasonal, form the hub of the two elemental human rites of passage that symbolically fuse within the image of the wedding party's winding path amongst the graves. Just as in Christine's dream a funeral procession had transformed into a wedding procession and then back again, and just as in the ballad fragment Trolle's body was brought to be buried on the very same spot where he and Brigitte had been wed, so too does Christine's march toward her second wedding at the same time hint at a first step in the transition from life into death.

Similar patterns of repetition and change also surround the rite itself, which is officiated by the pastor Petersen, standing "nun so grad und aufrecht wie vor neunzehn Jahren, als er, auch an einem Johannistage, die Hände Beider in einander gelegt hatte" (ibid.). The full weight of this symbolism of crossed thresholds only becomes truly felt in the procession back out of the church, however, for it is then that the nuptial and the funereal most overtly intertwine:

> [D]er lange Zug der Trauzeugen nahm jetzt den Rückweg dicht am Strande hin und stieg, als man den zur Dampfschiff-Anlegestelle führenden Brettersteg erreicht hatte, links einbiegend die Terrasse nach Schloß Holkenäs hinauf.
>
> Da war die hochzeitliche Tafel unter der vorderen Halle gedeckt, derart, daß alle Gäste den Blick auf das Meer hin frei hatten, und als der Augenblick nun gekommen war, wo…ein kurzes Festeswort gesprochen werden mußte, erhob sich Arne von seinem Platz und sagte, während er sich gegen Schwester und Schwager verneigte: "Auf das Glück von Holkenäs."
>
> […] Aber eine rechte Freude wollte nicht laut werden, und jedem Anwesenden kam ein banges Gefühl davon, daß man das "Glück von Holkenäs," wenn es überhaupt da war, nur heute noch in Händen hielt, um es vielleicht morgen schon zu begraben. (282-283)

Here, the settings of the shore and the sea converge around sequences of arrival and departure, of entrance and exit. The wedding procession leaves the churchyard in order to make its way along the coast to the place where Holk had first left for and returned from Copenhagen. Moreover, this is also the very spot from which Christine will secretly cast herself into the same water which she and her wedding guests now behold from Holkenäs. Significantly, it is at this site that the procession changes its course in order to accompany the bride and groom home. Like Alcestis, veiled and silent, Christine's arrival at the house—into which her husband ceremonially leads her for a second time—is simultaneously a return from a place of burial.[43]

The sense of foreboding that pervades the wedding party during Arne's well-intended toast proves not to have been out of place. Weeks pass in which "Friede herrschte, nicht Glück," and Christine gradually withdraws anew into speechlessness and melancholy (283). The entire household seems to suffocate on air suffused with

[43] Cf. Rehm 89.

awareness of the couple's constant effort to preserve peace at all costs, abandoning topics of discussion at a moment's notice if they threaten to take a disharmonious turn. One autumn day, Holk discusses Christine's state of mind with Dobschütz, suggesting that the desolating stillness that now fills the house most likely derives from the simple yet insurmountable obstacle in Christine's psyche "daß sie wohl vergessen möchte, aber nicht vergessen kann" (286).

Holk's hypothesis is soon substantiated. During a small evening gathering the following week, Asta and Elisabeth perform an English folk song together at the piano. The tune takes the form of an exchange between two lovers recalling past happiness, happiness which seems either to have ebbed or to have been banished by external circumstances. The last stanza is voiced by the female character, who declares:

> "Ich denke verschwundener Tage, John,
> Und sie sind allezeit mein Glück,
> Doch die mir die liebsten gewesen sind,
> Ich wünsche sie *nicht* zurück…" (289)

Just as she had done during Asta and Elisabeth's rendition of Waiblinger's "Der Kirchhof" at the beginning of the story, Christine once again leaves the room without a word. Dobschütz follows after her and finds Christine in her bedroom, "die Hände gefaltet, die Augen starr zu Boden gerichtet" (290). In answer to Dobschütz's inquiries, Christine merely repeats the final couplet of the strophe quietly, as if only to herself.

Following this scene, the text once again leaps forward in time, and the reader finds the other procession depicted in Christine's dream to already be underway. The scene opens one week after the evening party, and in a familiar setting. Mild weather and a gentle breeze surround Holkenäs, and, as the narrator relates, were it not for the presence of grape ivy coiled around the front pillars, one may well have thought that it was once again the day of Christine and Holk's second wedding. Notably, it is not only the warm air and the light that evoke the preceding celebration from St. John's Day, for

> auch die lange festliche Wagenreihe...genau wie am Tage der erneuten Trauung…war wieder da. Dazu klangen auch die Glocken wieder weit ins Land hinein, und die Mädchen von Holkebye standen, wie damals beim Erscheinen des hochzeitlichen Zuges, das Dorf entlang und streuten ihre Blumen. (Ibid.)

The reader quickly learns what the occasion of this second procession is: "*die*, die vom Schloße her des Weges kam, war eine Todte" (291, emphasis in the original).[44] Christine's body is borne back along the same route that she herself had walked as a bride only months before, and as the procession enters the churchyard, the pastor Petersen once again stands waiting. The coffin is lowered into a fresh grave next to the still-crumbling family crypt, "und die Erde schloß sich über Christine Holk. Ein Herz, das sich nach Ruhe sehnte, hatte Ruhe gefunden" (ibid.)

In certain respects, the funeral procession functions as a formal repetition of the wedding ceremony, yet precisely by virtue of invoking this previous event, it also serves as a Kierkegaardian herald of repetition's ironic failure.[45] After all, the second wedding does not turn out to have facilitated a rejuvenation of married life together, but instead ends with the bride's death and burial. In addition, this brief sequence also highlights the element of transformation that, along with repetition, was seen to be a significant component of ancient wedding and funeral rites. The mirroring of both ceremonies' choreography, which generated the central symbolic force of Christine's dream and Schleppegrell's ballad fragment, has now been literalized in the shared itinerary of Christine's wedding and funeral processions. The question that therefore remains to be addressed is: how and why has this *ekphora* come about? This question can also be

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[44] In his lyric restaging of the Alcestis myth in the *Neue Gedichte* (1907), Rainer Maria Rilke lingers over movements and images that are strikingly reminiscent of Fontane's description of Christine's interment, particularly in the moment where Alcestis makes ready to take Admetus' place in death: "…und das, was kam, war *sie*, / ein wenig kleiner fast als er sie kannte / und leicht und traurig in dem bleichen Brautkleid. / Die andern alle sind nur ihre Gasse / durch die sie kommt und kommt – : […]" (Rilke, "Alkestis," ln. 57-61).

[45] As was discussed in Chapter 1, this particular thought occupies the foreground of Kierkegaard's treatise on repetition, or *Gjentagelsen*, as a process not so much of "resurrecting" the past through anamnesis, but of reconstituting it "forwards" in time. Cf. Erwin Kobel, "Theodor Fontane: Ein Kierkegaard-Leser?" *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 36 (1992): 279; Julie K. Allen, "Theodor Fontane: A Probable Pioneer in German Kierkegaard Reception," in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Literature, Criticism, and Art*. Vol. I *The Germanophone World*, ed. Jon Stewart (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 61-79; and Paul Irving Anderson, *Ehrgeiz und Trauer*, 190-198.

formulated in terms of the arresting paralipsis that has just taken place: what transpired in the omitted time and textual space between Christine's recitation of the song lyric and her burial several days later?

The Empty Shore

The final chapter of *Unwiederbringlich* takes the form of a letter from Dobschütz to Schwarzkoppen in which she recounts the events immediately preceding and following Christine's death. The letter returns us to the point where the text had left off on the evening of Asta and Elisabeth's performance. "'Christine verließ gleich danach das Zimmer,'" Dobschütz recalls, "'und ich glaube, daß es von dem Augenblicke an in ihr feststand'" (291). Significantly, however, the letter goes on to describe how the following morning Christine's demeanor seems to have utterly changed: she is cheerful and open, making light conversation with Holk and Asta and displaying a general levity and "'Frische…wie ich sie, seit dem Tage ihrer Wiedervereinigung, nicht mehr an ihr wahrgenommen hatte'" (292). This remarkably altered behavior persists throughout the day, and as evening begins to fall Christine asks Dobschütz to accompany her to the shore in order to watch the sunset. The two make their way down to the slender landing dock that reaches out into the sea, and Christine gazes onto the water, reacting to the tranquil scene before her with a simple utterance: "'Wie schön.'"

She then suggests that they wait for the sun to disappear completely, but asks Dobschütz to retrieve their coats from the house to protect against the evening chill, telling her not to bother going all the way up the stairs, but simply to "'ruf' es bloß die Terrasse hinauf. Asta wird es schon hören'" (293). The letter notes the slight tone of embarrassment perceptible behind Christine's seemingly innocuous words, "'denn etwas Unwahres sagen, widerstrebte ihrer Natur'" (ibid.). Yet Dobschütz's private recognition of what Christine might in actuality be requesting of her does not carry over into

intervention of any kind. Indeed, the next moments are recounted with a candor that implies a sense of inevitability wordlessly shared by both women:[46]

> "Sie sah auch, welche Richtung meine Gedanken nahmen, aber ich durfte sie's doch nicht klar und unumwunden wissen lassen, was an Besorgniß in meiner Seele vorging, und so ging ich denn den Steg wieder zurück und die Terrasse hinauf, denn das mit dem 'Hinaufrufen bis Asta es höre', war nur so hingesagt worden.
>
> Als ich wieder am Ausgang des Steges ankam, fand ich die Gräfin nicht mehr und wußte nun, was geschehen." (Ibid.)

Here, at last, is the unwitnessed summit of the novel's dramatic arc: in the space between Dobschütz's withdrawal from and return to the shore, Christine has vanished. After a night of searching the water and surrounding shoreline, fishermen from the village arrive at Holkenäs the following morning with the news that Christine's body has been discovered. Dobschütz reports:

> "Wir gingen nun alle hinunter. Der Ausdruck stillen Leidens, den ihr Gesicht so lange getragen hatte, war dem einer beinah' heiteren Verklärung gewichen, so sehr bedürftig war ihr Herz der Ruhe gewesen." (Ibid.)

This serene face's communication of a fulfillment long sought and hard won is not Christine's final message, however. When Dobschütz and the others enter Christine's room in search of a suicide note or other potential clues, they find numerous pieces of paper with aborted salutations to different members of the family, but no letter. The sole document with any degree of completion is a copy of "Der Kirchhof"; the last line of the final couplet—"Wer haßt, ist zu bedauern / Und mehr noch fast wer liebt"—has been faintly underlined, and Dobschütz reflects that "eine ganze Geschichte lag in diesen verschämten Strichelchen" (295).

This remark goes to the heart of a problem that has puzzled critics of *Unwiederbringlich* for decades: how is one to understand Christine's suicide vis-à-vis the moral and religious precepts of duty that have determined her character throughout the

[46] The ambiguity surrounding Dobschütz's account of her own actions just before Christine's suicide could be linked to the novel's larger formal problematic of anecdotal narrative frames. See Claudia Öhlschläger, "'Das Maß der Dinge': Zur Poetologie anekdotischer Rahmung in Theodor Fontanes 'chronique scandaleuse' *Unwiederbringlich*," in *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Sabine Schneider and Barbara Hunfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008), 59-72.

novel? The fact that Christine has left behind the Waiblinger text with her "verschämten Strichelchen" in lieu of a note or letter clearly encourages the reader to revisit the two songs that bookend her action in the plot.[47] The lines of the English song that Christine recites to herself on the eve of her drowning—"Doch die mir die liebsten gewesen sind, / ich wünsche sie *nicht* zurück"—immediately invite comparison with the Waiblinger verse that captured her attention at the beginning of the story, and with which her own story concludes. When read together, "Der Kirchhof" and the folk song not only frame Christine's psychological progress through the course of the narrative, but also limn the conditions of her character at this specific juncture of the plot as well. As we observed, "Der Kirchhof" expresses the *vanitas* of temporal existence and the attendant risk of melancholy, and Christine's strict devotion to a normative schema of duty was seen to dovetail with this Pietist understanding of the proper approach to mortality. The English folk song then conveys the message that although one may not be able to elude the memory of lost contentment, one can nevertheless resist the temptation to yearn for its repetition.

Christine seems at once to realize (with the reader in tow) that her sadness is not so much the result of an inability to stave off memories of past happiness and heartbreak, but rather of a more structural infraction against her own moral framework that has taken place: namely, deciding to go through with the second wedding. In doing so, Christine effectively displaced the paradigm in which a certain category of being (life or death) would correspond with a certain intersubjective status (presence amongst the living or absence from them). In addition to the concrete themes of mourning and memorialization evinced by Christine's relation to the family crypt, this original paradigm is also manifested in terms of her and Holk's marriage; when Holk is physically apart

[47] For a discussion of how the interspersed ballads and songs—specifically Uhland's "Das Schloß am Meer," Waiblinger's "Der Kirchhof," and the anonymous folksong—bear resemblances or even possible causal relations to the action of the story, see Voss, *Literarische Präfiguration dargestellter Wirklichkeit bei Fontane*, 17-46.

from Christine in Copenhagen, he in a sense also "departs" from his status as a spouse by virtue of ceasing to fulfill the ethical conditions of this status. Although the revelation of his adultery devastates Christine, she can nevertheless contextualize it morally, and when the marriage itself ends in more official terms, she becomes able to mourn the formal absence of her husband that turns out to have accompanied his empirical absence all along.

However, this order of absolute categories is supplanted by the second marriage in which an elemental boundary line has vanished, allowing lack to reside surreptitiously within the silhouette of wholeness. The wedding procession marks the couple's aim to resurrect their marriage by repeating certain rituals and *de jure* conditions for it, but these prove merely to be the artificial repetition of an original state that veils its *de facto* absence. The coincidence of sepulchral and nuptial topoi within Christine's dream poignantly conveys this "veiling." To recall Euripides' tragedy, we might say that Holk and Christine's second marriage fails to perform Alcestis' "re-entrance," whereby a past state of marital union was reconstituted simply through the *re*union of the spouses.[48] Instead, it lingers within a similarly indeterminate space as the one in which Alcestis performs her act of self-mourning, for although Christine and Holk are once again wed, their marital bond has long since ceased to be. Christine had been able to bear her divorce from Holk because she could reconcile her solitude and the knowledge of his infidelity with an inner framework of piety and duty. What she cannot bear, however, is the simulated return of a marriage that merely allows its continued loss to blur into the contours of its false retrieval. Absence has crept into presence, much like Alcestis seemed to her maidservant to be "both living and dead." The melancholy that returns to

[48] Again, Rilke's beautiful rendition comes to mind; here he imagines the moment when Admetus watches Alcestis being led away by Hermes, bound for the underworld: "[…] Sie gingen / schon auf den Eingang zu, in dem die Frauen / verweint sich drängten. Aber einmal sah / er noch des Mädchens Antlitz, das sich wandte / mit einem Lächeln, hell wie eine Hoffnung, / die beinah ein Versprechen war: erwachsen / zurückzukommen aus dem tiefen Tode / zu ihm, dem Lebenden – […]" (Rilke, ibid., ln. 84-91).

plague Christine in the weeks and months after the wedding is not unlike this blended condition that so unsettles Alcestis' servant, especially when we recall what the Lutheran ethos of proper mourning proclaims to guard against.

This brings us back to the two songs. In the first part of the novel, Waiblinger's "Der Kirchhof" expressed the importance of resisting melancholia; i.e., of remaining vigilant against the desire for something lost to return. Similarly, the song that Elisabeth and Asta perform on the eve of Christine's drowning is about abandoning the futile wish to resurrect a past condition, as crystallized in the verse which she repeats to herself: "'Doch die mir die liebsten gewesen sind / ich wünsche sie *nicht* zurück.'" These lines suggest a way forward for Christine by invoking a paradigm in which ethical wholeness might endure in spite of moral lack—that is, in memorialization and the proper recognition of loss through rites of mourning. And indeed, Christine brings about the conditions for precisely this paradigm by disappearing beneath the waves.

In short, the need for a new kind of sacrifice has arisen; simply living a life of individual devotion to duty is no longer sufficient, or even possible. After all, the second wedding engenders a condition of absence-within-presence that disrupts what for Christine had been a "lawful" condition of thresholds. From this vantage point, the lesser evil would thus be to transgress against the laws of duty on an individual level by killing herself in order to re-establish a model of demarcation which those who survive her might take up as their own. The greater evil in turn would be to continue suffering within a brittle performance that not only betrays her own sense of moral duty, but also incorporates—and, in a certain regard, makes complicit—others besides herself. Although Christine's suicide appears at first glance to be a wholesale relinquishment of her moral and religious frameworks, I wish to suggest that the decision to drown herself is not necessarily equivalent to an obliteration of her *Pflicht* and faith per se, but is instead a culminating sacrificial exchange of the imperatives to which both correspond.

Central to the sacrificial nature of Christine's death is the effect that it has upon those who survive her. Dobschütz's letter refers to scenes of grief at Christine's loss, first during the burial itself where "'Alles drängte herzu, und die armen Leute, für die sie gesorgt, wehklagten'" and later to her own (293-94). Addressing Schwarzkoppen, she asserts that "'Ihnen wird Ihr Amt und Ihr Glaube die Kraft geben, den Tod der Freundin zu verwinden, aus meinem Leben aber ist das Liebste dahin, und was mir bleibt, ist arm und schal'" (295). Dobschütz's preliminary doubt that she will ever be able to overcome her friend's absence goes straight to the root of the mourning process that for Christine had embodied a proper demarcation of absence and presence; it is this sense of loss that inaugurates the crucial work of remembrance, which itself originates within the initial sting of certainty that what is gone is gone forever.

The issue of communal remembrance extends beyond the emotional domain of grief, however, for Dobschütz goes on to remark that "'Wie das Begräbniß war und wie Petersen sprach [...] das haben Sie gelesen in dem *Arnewieker Boten*, den Ihnen Baron Arne geschickt hat, und vielleicht auch in den *Flensburger Nachrichten*'" (294). The lack of any letters from Christine to her family, whether of explanation or farewell, stands in intriguing contrast with the theme of public memory, and more specifically of a textual record that serves as the medium of this memory.

This broaches the issue of contrasting "media of memory" that hover in the background of Fontane's novel. In particular, it is interesting to reflect on the primacy of place held by the newspaper form in this section of the plot, especially if we think ahead to Walter Benjamin's designation of this medium as one of information rather than of memory, devoted to "news" that "ihren Lohn mit dem Augenblick dahin [hat], in dem sie neu war. Sie lebt nur in diesem Augenblick […]"[49] Dobschütz, by contrast, would

[49] Benjamin, "Der Erzähler. Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," in *Medienästhetische Schriften*, ed. Detlef Schöttker (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 133 [VII].

appear to fulfill the responsibilities of the Storyteller by employing the instruments of memory rather than information, and especially in the service of memorializing the dead. Benjamin claims that the stories told about one who has passed on consist not in pieces of knowledge or wisdom that have been culled from that person's life, but rather in their "gelebtes Leben" itself. At the moment of their death, he writes, "so geht mit einem Mal…das Unvergeßliche auf und teilt allem, was [den Menschen] betraf, die Autorität mit, die auch der ärmste Schächer im Sterben für die Lebenden um ihn her besitzt. Am Ursprung des Erzählten steht diese Autorität."[50]

Despite the contrast that Benjamin draws between these two media of communal exchange—of the printed and the personally recounted—in the case of Fontane's novel they do not combat one another but rather join forces as sources of public remembrance. To the same degree that her literal absence had been echoed in the absence of any written communication, her presence as an object of memorial is echoed in the written words of her obituary. At the same time, the preservation of the eulogy and burial in newsprint also represents a preservation of individual death within communal memory—of the "spirit" within the "letter." The dual nature of this preservation that nevertheless underscores a boundary between absence and presence embodies the sacrificial substance of Christine's decision to vanish beneath the water that borders the community.

This raises a core question with which to conclude: what is the significance of Christine choosing water as the means of her sacrificial death? Fundamentally, drowning marks a body's movement from the surface level of appearances to the hidden realm below. For much of the novel, this essential division between surface and depths reflects Christine's own essential division between social exteriors and subjective interiors. However, at the end of *Unwiederbringlich*, as in so many works of German Realism, water

[50] Ibid., 137 [X].

serves as the topos—as both the setting and the symbolic representation—of sacrificial decision. When Christine disappears from the water's surface into its depths, she does so from the implicit vantage point of others, for whom the sea will appear as it had before. By making herself wholly absent in death, Christine undoes the scenario of the second marriage in which the authentic recognition of loss had been obscured by a blurring of irretrievability and artificial retrieval.

Yet the symbolic efficacy of Christine's disappearance beneath the waves and the *Unwiederbringlichkeit* that it embodies ultimately relies upon the eventual *retrieval* of her actual body. This necessity of partial presence for the full recognition of absence is the underlying message conveyed by the ritual processions that are woven throughout Fontane's novel. Much like Alcestis, whose liminal condition of being "both living and dead" (and therefore capable of grieving for herself) is eventually eclipsed by her *ekphora* and offstage burial, so too does Christine's submergence in the sea only attain its complete significance with her transformation into something that can be mourned by those left behind on the shore. Loss is once again present.

Conclusion – from the Lethe to the Sea

Secondary criticism has been divided over how to understand Christine's suicide, with some reading it simply as an act of despair in which she abandons her faith out of desperation over her lost happiness,[51] while others have resorted to designating it merely as an emblem of the various indeterminacies and mysteries that permeate the story.[52]

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[51] Edward McDonald, "Charakterdarstellung in Theodor Fontanes *Unwiederbringlich*," *Weimarer Beiträge* 17.1 (1971): 204.

[52] A recent proponent of this approach is Claudia Liebrand, who suggests that the "Rätselhaftigkeit" of Christine's suicide symbolizes the larger "puzzle" of femininity, and that with her death Christine becomes an "Opfer gesellschaftlicher Aporien." Max Rychner had taken a similar route over four decades earlier: "Der freiwillige Tod Christines ist eine mögliche Konsequenz aus ihrem Wesen, nicht eine notwendige. Sie steht im Widerspruch zu ihrem ganzen Glaubensleben […] Ein Geheimnis bleibt; keine Andeutung leuchtet in seiner Richtung." See Liebrand, "Geschlechterkonfigurationen in Fontanes 'Unwiederbringlich,'" in *Theodor Fontane: neue Wege der Forschung*, ed. Bettina Plett (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 206, 208; and Rychner, "Fontane's 'Unwiederbringlich,'" in *Sphären der Bücherwelt. Aufsätze zur Literatur* (Zürich: Manesse, 1951), 86.

Overall, however, the most popular reading has been that Christine's suppressed desires are shown simply to be stronger than her moral and dogmatic categories of duty.[53]

With an eye to these critical trends, it is worth asking what stands to be gained, hermeneutically speaking, by reading Christine's death as *sacrificial* rather than simply as a melodramatic act of desperation. The most immediate answer is that doing so offers one way of interpreting the drowning scene more rigorously, given that the majority of commentaries either avoid close analysis of it, or focus instead upon the various motivations and circumstances that might have incited it, thereby leaving its deeper structural and thematic underpinnings unaddressed. One strain of scholarship that diverges somewhat from these tendencies encompasses readings that do not regard Christine's suicide merely as desperation or a "defeat" of the Superego by the Id, but instead as a consciously sacrificial decision. For instance, Sylvain Guarda regards her death as a didactic self-sacrifice made for the sake of Holk's moral development,[54] while Michael Masanetz and Gertrud Sakrawa read it not as a negation or betrayal of her religiosity, but rather as an extreme expression of it through self-martyrdom.[55]

Finally, examining Christine's death through the lens of sacrifice broaches an important divide in critical opinion over how to give an account of the novel as a whole. Some commentators see its portrayal of happiness as a parochial study in emotional

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[53] Heide Eilert argues that this "stronger" side is in essence erotic, while Rudolf Koester (rather broadly) describes it as a manifestation of "human nature." Eilert, "Theodor Fontanes Roman *Unwiederbringlich* und die viktorianische Sexualmoral," 527-545; and Koester, "Death by Miscalculation. Some Notes on Suicide in Fontane's Prose," *German Life and Letters* 20 (1966/67): 34-42.

[54] "Als Pädagogin des Lebens hat Christine Holk zur *vollen* Genesung verholfen und muß nun nach ihrem Kindergottesdienst von der Lebensbühne abtreten." Guarda, "'Unwiederbringlich': Ein Fontanesches Weihnachts- oder Johannisspiel?" *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 111.4 (1992): 574.

[55] Masanetz suggests the suicide to be a darkly ironic reflection of both Christine's devout nature as a "Nachfolge der 'Heiligen Elisabeth'" and her "Gruftbaupassion und Totenverehrung." Sakrawa argues that for Christine, the act of going along with the second marriage to Holk comprises a sacrifice of self, but that since she cannot anticipate a spiritual condition of beatitude to follow, due to her earthly condition as a twice-married woman, the only option left to her is "stilles, heimliches Verlöschen durch die Flucht ins Meer." See Masanetz, "'Awer de Floth, de is dull!': Fontanes 'Unwiederbringlich', das Weltuntergangsspiel eines postmodernen Realisten," *Fontane-Blätter* 52 (1991): 76; and Sakrawa, "Scharmanter Egoismus," 28. Cf. Helena Ragg-Kirkby, "'Alles wie Opferstätte': Society and Sacrifice in the Works of Theodor Fontane," *Oxford German Studies* 29 (2000): 103.

relativity and historical contingency,[56] while others insist that Christine's decision to kill herself implies a paradox of subjective compulsion that is intriguingly modern.[57] Although there is certainly much in *Unwiederbringlich* that can be rightly classified as modern, I have attempted in this chapter to demonstrate that the novel—and particularly the drowning scene with which it culminates—also makes use of a thoroughly ancient poetics. If in nineteenth-century literature—and indeed throughout German Realism—the sea often stands for the immeasurability of both time and the human experience of it, then Christine's drowning (or perhaps drowning more generally) offers a striking metaphor for the willed annihilation of one's *own* memory even as one is preserved within the acts of remembrance performed by others.[58]

In this regard (and here especially one also thinks of Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*), Fontane's sea assumes the ancient symbolic function of rivers. Like the souls that Aeneas observes pressing forward to the banks of the Lethe in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, so too has Christine come to her own shore in order to wash away memory.[59]

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[56] For instance, Alan Bance writes that *Unwiederbringlich* is at heart a story about middle age, and that "to the degree that middle-aged marriage is aware of and seeks an escape from its own prosaic condition, it is a microcosm of nineteenth-century life, neither tragic nor heroic." Richard Brinkmann argues that the story paints a portrait of happiness as "relativiert…[das Glück] ist bezogen auf das individuell Gegebene und individuell Sittliche […] Auch Sittengesetz und 'Ordnungen' sind relativiert…Fontane sieht sie durch und durch historisch bedingt, keineswegs als höhere, ideale, vielleicht 'göttliche' Institutionen." Most colorfully, Wolfram Seibt briskly parses the novel as a "Lemurentanz von Zerr- und Gegenbildern der Ehe" (66). See Bance, *Theodor Fontane: The Major Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 104; Brinkmann, *Theodor Fontane: Über die Verbindlichkeit des Unverbindlichen* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977), 94; and Seibt, "Kruses Grab: Die versteckten Nicht-Ehen in Theodor Fontanes Gesellschaftsroman *Unwiederbringlich*," *Fontane-Blätter* 45 (1988): 66.

[57] Appraisals of *Unwiederbringlich* as an anticipation of modernist literary conventions are relatively thin on the ground, but no less productive for it. See, for instance, Hubert Ohl, "Zwischen Tradition und Moderne: der Künstler Theodor Fontane am Beispiel von *Unwiederbringlich*," in *Theodor Fontane: The London Symposium*, ed. Alan Bance, Helen Chambers and Charlotte Jolles (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1995), 235-252; and Michael Scheffel, "'Der Weg ins Freie' – Figuren der Moderne bei Theodor Fontane und Arthur Schnitzler," in *Theodor Fontane am Ende des Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hanna Delf von Wolzogen and Helmuth Nürnberger (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), 253-265.

[58] Several scholars have identified the subjective relationship to time as the linchpin of the narrative drama. For example, Walter Müller-Seidel argues that "Nicht die Charaktere, sondern die Zeitverhältnisse sind am Scheitern der Ehe maßgeblich beteiligt," and that this shattered marriage "spiegelt die gegensätzlichen Verhältnisse der Zeit: der Menschen, die wie Holk…nur dem Augenblick leben, und der Menschen, die wie Christine nur für Dauer und Ewigkeit zu sprechen sind." Similarly, Peter Demetz opines that the central psychological conflict of the story is "die Inkompatibilität der endlichen Alltäglichkeit und des unendlichen Gefühls." See Müller-Seidel, *Theodor Fontane*, 385, 392; and Demetz, *Formen des Realismus*, 177.

[59] See Paul Ricoeur's juxtaposition of *anamnesis* and the topos of the Lethe in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 27.

However, while the teeming shades in Virgil's underworld are waiting to drink from the river so that they will forget their past lives and thereby be able to re-enter the world above as new, un-haunted subjects, Christine is arguably more akin to Dante's Pilgrim in the *Purgatorio* who is bathed in these same Letheian currents in order to forget his sins before at last being reunited with his lost love, Beatrice. Similarly, Christine goes into the water in order to "lay aside the seed of weeping,"[60] and, as in Dante's Purgatory, the shore in *Unwiederbringlich* becomes a site not just of forgetting, but even of narrative omission and paralipsis.[61]

It is on a shore such as this, in the dwindling moments of daylight, that Christine finally finds her long-sought *Ruhe*, though not without an appropriate tinge of sadness, as Dobschütz's letter brings across. Here another Virgilian note can be heard in the concurrence of wistfulness with twilight, a parallel which Erwin Panofsky eloquently identifies as a "vespertinal mixture of sadness and tranquility" in which one seems to "feel evening silently settle over the world."[62] The culmination of Christine's last day at sunset accentuates precisely this simultaneity of resignation and rest, and the resultant sense of peace may consist partly in the knowledge that she will soon be free from the sorrow of memory. Yet this sense does not derive merely from an expectation of relief in death, given that Dobschütz notes how she already seems to have been relieved of her psychic burden earlier that day. Perhaps her solace is therefore due most to the recognition that in exchange for sacrificing her life—and with it her existential framework of duty and law—she might re-establish a relation between presence and absence that *is* commensurate with her moral system. In other words, by becoming absent to those who survive her, by relinquishing her own life and memory in order to

[60] Durling, *Purgatorio* XXXI, 533 (ln. 46).
[61] "When I drew near the blessed shore, '*Asperges / me*' was heard so sweetly that I cannot remember, / let alone write it." Ibid., 535 (ln. 97-99).
[62] Panofsky, "*Et in Arcadia Ego*: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 300-301.

live on in the memory of others, it becomes possible for mourning to reassume authority over artificial repetitions of things that are (and must remain) irretrievable. It is the price paid for the fleeting tranquility which Christine manages at last to experience during the sunset's brief reflection in the sea, and to then give voice to with two simple words which she has not been able to speak in earnest for the duration of the narrative: "Wie schön."

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In a letter to Georg Friedlaender from 7 November 1892, roughly one year after *Unwiederbringlich* first appeared in serialized form,[63] Fontane writes the following as part of a meditation on egoism and idiosyncrasy in human personality:

> Das 'Ich' zu opfern ist etwas Großes, aber es ist eine Spezialbeschäftigung, Vorstufe zur Heiligkeit oder schon die Heiligkeit selbst, ein Etwas, das man bewundert, danach man aber unter gewöhnlichen Verhältnissen nicht leben kann.[64]

The character of Christine Holk presents a twist on the two theses of this passage. As we have seen, the offering up of her *Ich* comes in two movements, the first corresponding with her innermost definitions of self vis-à-vis the adopted moral framework of duty and law, and the second with her physical, living body. While her drowning most immediately reflects a conscious forfeiture of "Heiligkeit" as her dogmatic principles would define it, the act also seems to convey the realization that sanctity, as Fontane's novel has demonstrated, is not something that can be "lived." Throughout *Unwiederbringlich*, the leitmotif of conflated wedding and funeral processions depicted an innate human wish for the separate spheres of presence and absence to blend, i.e., for the improbable repetition of things lost. However, the symbolism of these rites—particularly as found in

[63] See the editor's appendix, "Entstehung" (338-340).
[64] Fontane, *Briefe an Georg Friedlaender*, ed. Walter Hettche (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1994), 269. Cf. Sakrawa 22. A strikingly similar formulation of this notion is also voiced by the narrator of *Der Stechlin* (1898), one of Fontane's very last works: "'Eigentlich kommt's doch immer bloß darauf an, daß einer sagt, 'dafür sterb' ich!' Und es dann auch tut. Für was, is' beinahe gleich. Daß man überhaupt so etwas kann, wie sich opfern, das ist das Große.'" In *Sämtliche Werke* Bd. 5, ed. Walter Keitel (München: Hanser, 1966), 326.

ancient tragedy—also underscored the importance of transitioning from one sphere to the other.

Christine's sacrifice ensures that this transition will be completed, that the wedding procession—whose winding route amongst the gravestones had heralded the blending of ontological loss with artificial retrieval, and of truth with appearance—will be complemented by a funeral procession. What these ceremonies of traversal highlight, in addition to everything else we have seen, is the very motivic and structural importance shared by the element of water in the scheme of Fontane's narrative. After all, for most of the story the sea functions as a boundary between symbolic spaces; between the exteriority and immediacy of the *polis*, on the one hand, and the interiority and hushed solitude of the *oikos*, on the other.[65] By drowning herself, and thereby relinquishing her moral framework along with her life, Christine re-establishes a "lawful" dialectic of subjective relation to presence and absence, and in doing so enlists the physical and symbolic potency of the sea as a primordial boundary. On the morning of her disappearance from the shore, Christine seems to have recognized that even though her death will constitute a private transgression against duty, it will ultimately renew the conditions for duty to be fulfilled by a community of others. Perhaps it is this recognition that most affords the resolve and quietude of her final hours and minutes, if not in the form of lasting consolation, then at least in that of briefly savoured peace at the water's edge.

[65] Cf. Michael White, "'Hier ist die Grenze [...] Wollen wir darüber hinaus?' Borders and Ambiguity in Theodor Fontane's 'Unwiederbringlich,'" *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 129 (2010): 109-123.

Epilogue

Ophelia and Her Children

Und wenn dich das Irdische vergaß,
zu der stillen Erde sag: Ich rinne.
Zu dem raschen Wasser sprich: Ich bin.
—Rainer Maria Rilke[1]

On 17 January 1778, Christel von Laßberg, a young courtier and actress from Goethe's *Hoftheater* in Weimar, was found drowned on the banks of the Ilm. It was reported that a copy of Goethe's *Leiden des jungen Werthers* had been discovered amongst her belongings nearby, adding to subsequent speculation that she had taken her life out of romantic despair.[2] Werther too had been tempted to jump into a river as he stood "Mit offenen Armen […] gegen den Abgrund, und atmete hinab! hinab, und verlor mich in der Wonne, all meine Qualen all mein Leiden da hinab zu stürmen, dahin zu brausen wie die Wellen."[3] However, Werther resists the pull, even as he "wehmütig hinab sah auf ein Plätzgen, wo ich mit Lotten unter einer Weide geruht," while Christel's inverse fate is hauntingly reflected in Goethe's account of constructing "ein seltsam Pläzgen, wo das Andencken der armen Christel verborgen stehn wird."[4] There is a dark irony in the fact that Christel worked in the theater, for both the setting and manner of her final, unwitnessed moments on the riverbank immediately evoke the offstage death of Shakespeare's Ophelia, which would become one of the defining topoi of European culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Just as Goethe's fictional character Ottilie served as a point of entry for this project's exploration of the thematic associations (i.e., law and sacrifice) as well as

[1] Ln. 12-14, *Die Sonette an Orpheus* II, 29 (1923).
[2] Effi Biedrzynski, *Goethes Weimar. Das Lexikon der Personen und Schauplätze* (Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1993), 267.
[3] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, in *Werke* Bd. 4, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp and Waltraud Wiethölter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 80.
[4] Goethe, *Briefe. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe* Bd. 3.1, ed. Georg Kurscheidt and Elke Richter (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 191 [#324, an Charlotte von Stein, 19. Januar 1778].

narratological features (i.e., the *Augenblick*) of drowning scenes in realist narrative, so too does the biographical and tragic event of Laßberg's death bring into focus the purpose of these last few pages, which is to cast a brief glance on the ways in which Ophelia performed a similar kind of role as Ottilie for the works of prose and poetry that followed the epoch of German Realism. More broadly, we will note how in numerous important works of early modernism, the symbolism of water—and in many cases the figure of Ophelia—is used to convey an intriguing tension, standing both for the projection of the human interior onto nature as well as for the experience of alienation from one's own subjective interior. This antinomy is what the inherent "boundary" of water—i.e., the division between the world above the surface and the unseen domain beneath it—will come to mean in modernist literature, no longer merely *symbolizing* an intrinsic component of social and ethical existence, as in Realism, but *embodying* a certain limit of human experience itself.

I.

There has been much attention paid to the reception and influence of Shakespeare's Ophelia in nineteenth-century art and literature, and more specifically in German Expressionism. Though the figure of Ophelia only became a truly popular trope in the German sphere towards the end of the century, the intrinsic qualities of her character were long recognized for their strong resonances with Romantic lyric, particularly her inwardness, reverie, and close association with nature. Before getting to this, however, let us first turn to the *Quelle* (along with every connotation of the word): namely, the canonical instance of drowning in modern literature, as narrated by Gertrude in Act IV, scene 7 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

The sequence begins with Gertrude's description of a willow tree growing "aslant a brook" such that its leaves can be seen reflected in the water (3315-3316). This simple

detail establishes the pulse of the drowning's symbolic significance by drawing attention to the theme of reflection; in this case, of one natural element functioning as the "mirror" for another. This image becomes more elaborate when Gertrude describes how Ophelia appears, drawing near the willow with garlands of flowers and nettles that she intends to hang from the branches, thus reiterating the motif of one facet of the natural world being reflected within another (here it is the quality of the willow's branches that the hand-fashioned garlands are meant to imitate, while in the previous lines it had been the very image of the tree itself that was repeated in the water's surface). However, as Ophelia is attempting to weave "her weedy trophies" into the willow, "an envious sliver broke," and she falls into the "weeping brook."

It is now no longer another element of nature that the tree and the water reflect, but rather human characteristics—the boughs are "envious," and the brook is "weeping" (3322-3324). This anthropomorphism precedes the crucial moment of Gertrude's monologue, in which Ophelia in turn seems to become proper to water: she is briefly carried along by the brook's currents after falling in, "Which time she chaunted snatches of old tunes, / As one incapable of her own distress, / Or like a creature native and indued / Unto that element" (3328-3330). The dreaminess and supposed madness with which Ophelia's singing has been associated throughout the play is here echoed a final time, and together with her woven flowers evokes the traditional linkage between reverie and artistic activity. However, Ophelia's last moments are not remarkable solely for the fact that her song makes her seem "incapable of her own distress," but also for the sudden coalescence of her character with the water's qualities. Just as nature had previously mirrored itself before taking on human qualities, now the human figure of Ophelia reciprocates this pattern by becoming a "creature native and indued" to water by way of her reflexive inwardness.

Ophelia's drowning thus communicates something particular about the characteristics of poeticity, dreaminess, and madness that she would come to embody in European culture, for it shows these themes to be tied not simply to her introversion, but to her participation in the specific process of *reflection* that had first appeared in the natural sphere. In reflecting and becoming "native" to water by the same poetic authority that allows the water to be said to weep, Ophelia's death is a culminative instance of the human figure and the natural landscape seeming to trade places. It is this mutual transformation that Ophelia's leitmotifs of poetic creation and introspective reverie ultimately convey, and it was this combination of aspects that consistently inspired German writers from different artistic epochs to explore and adapt her as a trope.

"…a creature native and indued / Unto that element"

In the context both of Romanticism and Expressionism (along with several important moments in between), the association between a female figure and the element of water typically signaled the conjoined themes of transition and escape. This is an ancient motif, going back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which the death of Canens is likened to that of a swan, "liquefied by sorrow" [*luctibus…liquefacta*], while Arethusa is literally transformed into water by Diana in order to elude her pursuer.[5] This association continues to play an important role in literary scenes of drowning, including several of the examples from German Realism that we have observed. What changes, however, is what *kind* of escape the motif of drowning is used to evoke.

The Romantics frequently reached for the figure of the *Wasserfrau* (mermaids, sirens, nymphs, etc.) in order to underline a certain oneiric core to quotidian reality and experience. A standard scene in this idiom involves a (usually male) poet-protagonist who is surprised to witness a *Wasserfrau* of some denomination emerge from the water,

[5] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIV.429-432 and V.632-638, respectively. Cf. Simone Kindler, *Ophelia. Der Wandel von Frauenbild und Bildmotiv* (Berlin: Reimer, 2004), 55.

suddenly transfiguring the realm of nature from within. The symbolic message is fairly consistent: in moments of poetic encounter between the subject and the world, the dreamy and erotic domain of the unconscious can suddenly suffuse everyday life, more often than not with fatal consequences for those involved. *Wasserfrauen* either come out to claim mortals (as in Goethe's "Der Fischer" [1779] and Heine's "Die Loreley" [1824]) or—and the distinction is often pointedly ambiguous—the poet actively enters the underwater space, allegorizing the act of entering his own subjective interior (a number of Eichendorff's and Goethe's lyrics fall into this category, as does Friedrich Schlegel's "Das versunkene Schloß" [1807]).

Within a relatively short period of time, the association of femininity with water underwent a noteworthy aesthetic transition. Just as Romanticism had inherited and re-invented the antique mythos of the siren, undine, and nyad at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Symbolist and early Expressionist writers seized upon Ophelia as an object of fascination at the beginning of the twentieth. This tropological shift—from the sirenic *Wasserfrau* to the Ophelian *Wasserleiche*—is connected to much broader developments in how modern European culture conceptualized and represented femininity in relation to death.[6] During the course of the nineteenth century, the image of a woman in water ceased to stand for either the poetic potentiality of the subjective interior or the hazards of its irrational powers, and gradually came to symbolize a new sense of alienation from the subjective interior altogether. Moreover, this sense of self-alienation began to hint at a complex psychological relationship between the potentially

[6] For a psychoanalytic account of these developments—albeit without specific attention to the theme of drowning apart from some general remarks on *L'Inconnue de la Seine*—see Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 1992), esp. 205-219. Cf. Magda Romanska, "Ontology and Eroticism: Two Bodies of Ophelia," *Women's Studies* 34 (2005): 485-513.

deadly consequences of desire and the presence of an ambivalent desire *for* the mortification of a longed-for object.[7]

Although German Realism falls at the exact midpoint of this transition, neither of these polar archetypes are drawn upon explicitly in the texts we have considered. And yet, as we have seen, drowning is ubiquitous in them. It falls beyond the purview of this dissertation to fully explore if and how drowning in Realism constitutes a station in this much larger motivic genealogy of the *Wasserfrau*, but it is nevertheless worth considering some of the key instances that precede and succeed the Realist works we have examined in this project.

One of the most noteworthy examples is Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's 1824 novel fragment *Ledwina*. The opening sequence feels at once antique and Ophelian, as we find the eponymous protagonist making her way along a riverbank before stopping to gaze at the currents. The text at once establishes a subtle dialectic of nature and culture in which the river demarcates a sphere of oneiric and lyric introversion that will be juxtaposed with the bourgeois sphere of domestic interiors and social ritual throughout the rest of the narrative. In doing so, it does not so much oppose the externality of nature with the internality of domesticity but instead intimates a contrast between two kinds of interiority: the constrained order of the home and the "open interior" of introversion and reverie that, in turn, extends to a zone of poetic activity. Thus, even without the explicit use of water topoi, Ledwina—like Goethe's Ottilie[8]—is immediately presented to the reader in Ophelian terms.

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[7] This thesis of a "Paradigmenwechsel von Undine zu Ophelia" forms the cornerstone of Anna Maria Stuby's useful study *Liebe, Tod und Wasserfrau: Mythen des Weiblichen in der Literatur* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), here 165. For a more general overview of the nineteenth-century *Wasserfrau* motif that managed to circumvent the "Ophelia cult," see Matthias Vogel, *"Melusine…das lässt aber tief blicken": Studien zur Gestalt der Wasserfrau in dichterischen und künstlerischen Zeugnissen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1989).

[8] Interiority, reverie, and introversion are the characteristics that have inspired easily the majority of critical studies of Ottilie (including Walter Benjamin's). For our purposes, one need only recall that just before the drowning scene, Goethe shows Ottilie walking with the child along the shore while reading: "Sie vergaß Zeit und Stunde, und dachte nicht, daß sie zu Lande noch einen weiten Rückweg…habe; aber sie saß

However, this affinity becomes explicit as Ledwina continues to regard the river and the objects and reflections carried along by its movement:

> Ledwinens Augen aber ruhten auf ihrer eigenen Gestalt, wie die Locken von ihrem Haupte fielen und forttrieben, ihr Gewand zeriß und die weißen Finger sich ablösten und verschwammen.
>
> Da wurde ihr, als ob sie wie tot sei und die Verwesung lösend ihre Glieder treffe und jedes Element das Seinige mit sich fortreiße.[9]

In the narrative's most iconic scene, this thematic framework manifests itself fully: Ledwina, awoken from sleep by "eine grauenvolle Traumwelt," looks about her moonlit room. The illuminated window-curtain catches her eye,

> und da der Fluß unter ihm zog, schienen [die Fenster] zu wallen wie das Gewässer. Der Schatten fiel auf ihr Bett und teilte der weißen Decke dieselbe Eigenschaft mit, daß sie sich wie unter Wasser vorkam.
>
> Sie betrachtete dies eine Weile, und es wurde ihr je länger, je grauenhafter; die Idee einer Undine ward zu der einer im Fluß versunkenen Leiche, die das Wasser langsam ruhig zerfrißt, während die trostlosen Eltern vergebens ihre Netze in das unzugängliche Reich des Elements senken. Ihr ward so schauerlich, daß sie sich...entschloß, aufzustehen und die Vorhänge wegzuziehen.[10]

Here, Droste-Hülshoff directly links the liminal—yet domestic—space between waking and dreaming to the *unheimliche* space of imagination. Insofar as Ledwina's assumed perspective of a drowned corpse from beneath the water constitutes an "impossible" vantage, her reverie symbolizes the oneiric process of internally confronting a space that otherwise occludes all possible lived experience. In other words, drowning in the first-person perspective (rather than in the established tragic mode of an "offstage" incident) casts the act of envisioning one's own de-subjectivization as an inherently *poetic* act.[11]

In 1870, Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Ophélie" appeared, and it was this literary event which many critics cite as the principle instigation of modernist interest in Ophelia, particularly within the German-speaking world. This is because in several documented

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versenkt in ihr Buch, in sich selbst…" Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, in *Werke* Bd. 3, ed. Albrecht Schöne and Waltraud Wiethölter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 591.

[9] Droste-Hülshoff, *'Ledwina' und andere Erzählungen. Die nachgelassenen Prosadichtungen,* ed. Elmar Jansen (Weimar: Gustav Kiepenhauer Verlag, 1969), 8.

[10] Ibid., 51-52.

[11] Brigitte Peucker, "Droste-Hülshoff's Ophelia and the Recovery of Voice," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 82.3 (1983): 375-377.

ways, "Ophélie" set a course that German Expressionism would follow closely.[12] Rimbaud's poem begins where Gertrude's speech left off in Act IV of *Hamlet*, tracing the voyage of Ophelia's corpse. This watery journey would gradually come to constitute the central scenography of Expressionist poems devoted to her. In an important sense, this particular focus also anticipates Naturalism's interest in unobscured access to the narrative event (as we shall see shortly). That is, in contrast to Realism's more theatrical employment of the drowning scene as an "offstage" occurrence—following in the vein of Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*—Rimbaud's "Ophélie" accompanies the corpse's passage through a nocturnal landscape, with the reader in tow.

Critics have underscored various dimensions of Rimbaud's poem that they consider to be most significant; Stefan Bodo Würffel, for instance, homes in upon the text's intimation of a de-mythologized "*Jenseits*" (figured here as the human subject's reintegration into the natural environment), as well as its final invocation of Ophelia in opposition to the poet, which establishes her as a poetological as well as a poetic figure (more about this later).[13] Others have attended to the poem's new emphasis on materiality and decay in contrast to the idealizing tendencies of other epochal adaptations of Ophelia's death scene.[14] Ulrike Weinhold extends this focus to the specific question of Ophelia's passivity as a female object of fascination for a male poetic voice.[15] Nearly all of these facets of Rimbaud's poem assume central positions in what one could justly call the iconography of Ophelia in German modernism.

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[12] Bernhard Blume, "Das ertrunkene Mädchen: Rimbauds Ophélie und die deutsche Literatur," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift* 4 (1955): 108-119; Jürg Peter Rüesch, *Ophelia. Zum Wandel des lyrischen Bildes im Motiv der "navigation vitae" bei Arthur Rimbaud und im deutschen Expressionismus* (Zürich: Juris-Verlag, 1964).
[13] Würffel, *Ophelia: Figur und Entfremdung* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1985), 44-51. Cf. Frauke Bayer, *Mythos Ophelia: zur Literatur- und Bild-Geschichte einer Weiblichkeitsimagination zwischen Romantik und Gegenwart* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2009), 169-174, 217-223.
[14] Jean-Louis Bandet, "Von Ophélie zu Ophelia: Wege eines Bildes von Arthur Rimbaud zu Georg Heym," in *Gallo-Germanica: Wechselwirkung und Parallelen deutscher und französischer Literatur (18.-20. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Eckhard Heftrich and Jean-Marie Valentin (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1986), 249-262; Rainer Nägele, "Phantom of a Corpse: Ophelia from Rimbaud to Brecht," *MLN* 117.5 (2002): 1069-1082.
[15] Weinhold, "Bemerkungen zu Ophelia," in *Grenzgänge: Literatur und Kultur im Kontext*, ed. Guillaume van Gemert and Hans Ester (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 297-310; Würffel, *Ophelia*, 303.

"Wo mit rührenden Schritten ehdem Ophelia ging…"[16]

How should one go about tracing the course taken by motifs of death in water after German Realism? One possible place to begin would be the point at which Realism ends, namely the conclusion of Fontane's *Unwiederbringlich*, just after Christine's remains have been found. As Dobschütz recounts in her letter to Schwarzkoppen:

> "Wir gingen nun alle hinunter. Der Ausdruck stillen Leidens, den ihr Gesicht so lange getragen hatte, war dem einer beinah' heiteren Verklärung gewichen, so sehr bedürftig war ihr Herz der Ruhe gewesen."[17]

It would be possible to regard the vignette of Christine's retrieval from the sea as a point of convergence between the ancient and modern associations of death with water that would take center stage in literary epochs after Realism. The fishermen who bring her body to shore might allude subtly to Charon, the boatman of the dead, while Dobschütz's description of Christine's features as having taken on "einer beinah' heiteren Verklärung" anticipates the iconic visage of *L'Inconnue de la Seine*. Rainer Maria Rilke's *Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), one of the paradigmatic narratives of European modernism, would refer to a similar "Gesicht der jungen Ertränkten, das man in der Morgue abnahm, weil es schön war, weil es lächelte, weil es so täuschend lächelte, als wüßte es."[18] Maurice Blanchot's description of this same death mask (he owned a copy) has even more in common with Dobschütz's vision of Christine, however. He remarks upon the drowned woman's face, "aux yeux clos, mais vivante par un sourire si délié, si fortuné (voilé pourtant), qu'on eût pu croire qu'elle s'était noyée dans un instant d'un extrême bonheur."[19]

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[16] Georg Trakl, "Wind, weiße Stimme…" (ca. 1912), ln. 6.
[17] Theodor Fontane, *Unwiederbringlich. Große Brandenburger Ausgabe. Das erzählerische Werk* Bd. 13, ed. Christine Hehle (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2003), 293.
[18] Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, in *Werke. Kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden* Bd. 3, ed. August Stahl (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1996), 507-508.
[19] Blanchot, *Une voix venue d'ailleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 15. Blanchot and Malte's fascination with the death mask are representative of a widespread fixation upon *L'Inconnue* during the early twentieth century. Anne-Gaëlle Saliot suggests, for instance, that Rilke's Malte is struck by the death mask because it taps into his (Malte's) leitmotivic "fear of anonymous death […] death as an anonymous product, as an object

The scenario of an untimely death in the Seine had already established itself as a familiar trope in French letters by the time of Balzac.[20] For example, in the opening pages of his 1831 novel *La Peau de chagrin*, a young man—notably referred to at one point as "L'Inconnu"—strolls matter-of-factly toward the Pont Royal in order to drown himself after losing all of his money at a gambling house. He seems to walk almost out of a sense of custom, "en songeant aux dernières fantaisies de ses prédécesseurs," even picturing a recent newspaper item about a young woman who had taken her life in the same fashion. Given this strikingly ubiquitous precedent, it is perhaps no accident that one of the more focused analyses of drowning from an aesthetic standpoint was written by a fellow countryman of Balzac, Rimbaud, and Blanchot.

Gaston Bachelard's essay on the "Charon Complex" and the "Ophelia Complex" begins by proposing two different spatial frameworks for the association between death and water: one of "navigation" (symbolized by the mythic figure of Charon) and the other of "materialization" (embodied by Ophelia). Like the binary images of water and the shore, these two spatial frameworks are also divided between "cultural dreams" of death in terms of metaphysical departure, on the one hand, and in terms of physical (i.e., mortal) remains, on the other. Bachelard presents the Charon complex as a crystallization of the ancient notion of death as a process of traversal or passage, the most widespread and ancient expression of which is the image of a boatman conveying the souls of the dead away from the realm of life and into Hades. The perspectival emphasis here falls on the vanishing point of life's horizon, seen, as it were, "from the shore." Water stands for the separation between the living and the dead, with death being conceived as a

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without value." Malte finds the smile of the mask "deceitful precisely because it conceals the materiality of death" that has replaced the older conception of death that rested upon assumptions of individualization and the singularity of the human personality. See Saliot, *The Drowned Muse: Casting the Unknown Woman of the Seine across the Tides of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 130. Cf. Bayer, *Mythos Ophelia*, 197-205.

[20] Cf. Lucette Besson, "L'eau de mort ou le thème de la noyade chez Balzac," *L'Année balzacienne* 1.4 (2003): 307-329.

"journey" or departure, and as such water constitutes the medium not only of conveyance into the afterlife, but also of the survivors' (i.e., culture's) visualization of this conveyance.[21]

By contrast, the Ophelia complex signals a concretization of death in *this* realm, as felt and understood by those still alive and left standing on the "shore." This perspectival shift from passage to stasis—from the topos of the boat to that of the water beneath it—is at the heart of drowning's significance for Bachelard. Unlike the Charon complex, death in the Ophelian mode is not conceptualized as a journey to some other realm, rather Ophelia's drowning materializes what Bachelard terms the "dream" of death per se, whereby "L'imagination…de la mort trouve dans la matière de l'eau une image matérielle particulièrement puissante et naturelle […] un *néant substantiel*."[22] This pertains to the modern representation of death from the vantage of the living; that is, to the representation of death not as the cessation of subjective experience (from the perspective of the dead), but as the process of being restricted to *this* side of the boundary by virtue of still being alive, and of being left merely with the remains (rather than the testimony or explications) of those who have "departed." Ophelia's water contains death within it and is radically *here*, whereas Charon's water is a means of passage into death as an imagined other place.

Yet at the same time, Bachelard makes clear that Ophelia is also to be understood as an emblem of that which is least "material" within the human individual: namely, of inwardness, imagination, and reverie. As anticipated by Rimbaud's 1870 poem, this bivalent fusion of the de-mythologized materiality of death and the persistent intangibilities of the subjective interior is what would become most important in literary iterations of the Ophelia motif after Realism. Interestingly, however, Bachelard notes

[21] Bachelard, "Le complexe de Caron. Le complexe d'Ophélie," in *L'eau et les rêves: Essai sur l'imagination et de la matière* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2012), 91-95.
[22] Ibid., 105, 108.

that Shakespeare's description of the drowning is devoid of "realism," insofar as it is not presented as something directly witnessed, but rather as something retrospectively and imaginatively recounted. Moreover, Bachelard understands it to be opposed to realism because the reader need not ever have observed a scene of this kind in real life in order to immediately, vividly, and deeply see it unfold before their mind's eye, "parce que ce spectacle appartient à la nature imaginaire primitive."[23] While German Realists such as Julian Schmidt would likely reply that such objectivity is precisely what their literary project is *not* reducible to,[24] the key thing to note here is that the figure of Ophelia for Bachelard combines the final, exterior materiality of the body with the complex interiority of this body's former self. German literary movements after Realism tend to emphasize precisely these two elements in their drowning scenes.

II.

When Naturalism emerged as a movement in the 1880s, it understood itself (and largely continues to be understood today) as a reaction against Realism, which it thought to be idyllic and false. Naturalism sought to be a perfectly accurate recording of reality as it truly is, rather than as it can or should be (hence Arno Holz's famous dictum that the movement's aesthetic objective should be "Natur minus *x*," with *x* standing for all traces of authorial artifice).[25] Consequently, when drowning occurs in naturalist texts, it often ceases to perform the central symbolic function that we observed in Realism, instead becoming incidental to the event of death and the effect that this event has within the larger narrative economy. In other words, if water is nearby, it is only natural (or

[23] Ibid., 98.
[24] And, in fact, Bachelard is not necessarily in disagreement, for he too notes that "[u]n tel réalisme, loin d'éveiller des images, bloquerait plutôt l'essor poétique" (ibid.).
[25] For in-depth examinations of Naturalist techniques of narration vis-à-vis this socio-cultural context, see Roy Pascal, *From Naturalism to Expressionism: German Literature and Society 1880-1918* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicholson, 1973); and Ingo Stöckmann, *Der Wille zum Willen: Der Naturalismus und die Gründung der literarischen Moderne 1880-1900* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

Naturalist) to expect that someone might drown in it, but this becomes secondary to the circumstances surrounding the death itself.

All of these characteristics of Naturalism are on display in Gerhart Hauptmann's 1891 drama *Einsame Menschen*, which culminates with the offstage drowning of the protagonist, Johannes. In a sort of contrapuntal response to the death of Hebbel's Klara, with all of her concern for moral necessity and the reputation of her family members in the eyes of the community, the death of Hauptmann's Johannes comes as a final act of self-centeredness. Far from sacrificing his own life and reputation for the sake of others, Johannes commits suicide out of despair over the loss of his own happiness (viz., extramarital passion) that is grounded precisely upon the betrayal of others (above all his wife). By comparison, in Hauptmann's slightly earlier novella *Fasching* (1887), the drowning scene is framed as a result not of sacrificial decision, but instead of the protagonist's failure to recognize his vulnerability both to the natural environment and to the consequences of his own actions. In both of Hauptmann's texts, drowning is not the telos of decisions that are made "facing outwards," as it were. Instead, death in water seems to underscore the relatively ignoble course of choices that either "turn inward," or that are undertaken without substantial reflection.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the short-lived literary movement of Impressionism sought to push back against the exacting criteria of Naturalism in order to delve into the sensuous and subjective dimensions of human experience. As such, the theme of drowning once again assumed the symbolic function that Hauptmann's Naturalism had de-emphasized, particularly in the work of Eduard von Keyserling. In narratives such as *Wellen* (1911), for instance, the sea is used to reflect the ever-changing and uncontrollable inner landscape of the individual, consistently giving figural expression to the characters' desires, fears, and thoughts. Additionally, it is portrayed throughout the story in terms redolent of Schopenhauer's concept of the Will,

manifesting a pre-rational, pre-subjective, and incomprehensible force that seems to govern the natural world as much as it does the human subject. Therefore, whenever characters drown—and they do, or try to, rather often—it comes across as an attempted negation of the Will (but therefore ultimately a surrender to it) within the element that symbolizes the Will itself.

It was with Expressionism that Ophelia made her entrance onto the cultural stage as a truly central figure, bridging either end of the Great War with her concatenation of the Expressionists' characteristically grim preoccupations, including the absurdity of existence, psychological trauma, violence, and madness. Within the German canon, Georg Heym stands out as the Expressionist who most committedly worked in an Ophelian idiom, penning poems on subjects such as "Der Tod der Liebenden im Meer," "Ophelia," and "Die Tote im Wasser." (In a morbid echo of his own writings, Heym himself drowned in 1912 after falling through a patch of thin ice, only several years after the first of these poems appeared). As in Rimbaud's "Ophélie," in Heym's poems death is figured as a transition and transformation, but rather than emphasizing Ophelia's re-integration into nature in an image of unification between subject and object, here we find death as an *Entzauberung* of nature and myth. Death is no longer a metamorphosis or journey, but instead an unveiling of the cold material to which all human life is eventually reduced.[26] In Heym's "drowning poems" (as in Gottfried Benn's work), the process of death delivers up remains for the living and the reader to find, and for nature to reclaim in decidedly unlyrical and de-idealized ways.

As a case in point, in Heym's "Ophelia" and "Die Tote im Wasser" (written in 1910 and 1911, respectively), the drowned human figure that crosses paths with the lyric eye has been radically reduced to even less than a body, for we hear it described not in terms of *who* the unknown woman in the water had been in life, but of the different ways

[26] Weinhold, "Bemerkungen zu Ophelia," 305; Würffel 61-83.

in which her corpse now serves as a vessel and means of survival for other living things (most frequently rats, a grisly theme which Gottfried Benn would also play upon in his somewhat better known poem of 1912, "Schöne Jugend").

As these brief examples illustrate, and as Bachelard's essay would later suggest, the trope of death-in-water alters its message in modernism. It no longer communicates the mysterious departure and journey of the dead away from us, the living, which we can only watch and wonder about from the shore. In the modernist paradigm, our position on the shore has not changed, but death is now *in* the water in a different way; it rests there before us just as plainly as the water itself does, and it leaves its traces there for us to find. Insofar as the dead now seem reducible to their remains in a way that is newly raw and resistant to romanticization, they are suddenly and terribly still *here* in spite of seeming to be gone in a way that is equally sudden and terrible.

"And everything except the river holds its breath"[27]

The English writer Roger Deakin was well acquainted with this experience. Himself an avid swimmer of Britain's rivers, lakes, and streams, in his later years he also took up the peculiar hobby of investigating instances of water deaths that occurred in the marshy countryside of his native Suffolk. After his death, handwritten notes were found amongst his effects in which he had recorded and reflected upon these cases; one entry in particular speaks to his own encounters with the multivalent significance presented by the boundary between water and shore. It offers a fragmentary account of Deakin's conversation with a local inspector in which he was told that cases of suicide by drowning had once been quite prevalent, given the ubiquity of water on the East Anglian fens, but that in recent years incidents of this had become rarer. However, Deakin's

[27] Elizabeth Bishop, *In the Village* (1953).

notes indicate, "Old people still do it […] it was a classic way to die. Old people have gone off and taken their glasses and teeth and left them in a pile and waded in…"[28]

This vignette recounted by Deakin in many ways embodies the existential message of the drowning motif in modernist German literature, centering as it does upon our ability only to happen upon and perhaps catalog the traces that get left behind on this side of water. The shore represents a deeper boundary line of our knowledge, however, underscoring our *Diesseitigkeit* that concomitantly stokes a desire to comprehend the *Jenseits*.[29] This "hereness" in which we are all embedded as living beings that are also conscious of our own being mandates by its own token that we cannot directly access or experience anything that lies beyond the boundaries of this frame. These boundaries are of numerous kinds—epistemic, ontological, and otherwise—and function simultaneously as the foundational ground and the outer limit of our lived knowledge, as the history of philosophy, theology, and science often attests. However, while this limit is generally understood to be impenetrable, in the course of our lives we do encounter phenomena and undergo experiences that are thought somehow to correspond to this otherwise inaccessible domain, even if we cannot understand exactly how.

Throughout the course of human culture, the institutions of religion, philosophy, and poetry have tended to be those most at ease with this notion of an essential boundary. Hence the liturgical potency of a sacrament for Augustine, as a visible sign within which "divine" and "invisible things" are "honored,"[30] or the underlying substance of all phenomena for Kant as "bloße Erscheinungen…[denen] ein Ding an

[28] Deakin, "Drowning (coroners), 1998," [RD/WLOG/2/24] (University of East Anglia Library), 4.
[29] As a parenthetical item of interest, Freud remarks in passing that the very terms *Diesseits* and *Jenseits* originated in reference to riverbanks, as older customs held that the dead should be kept separate from the living community by being interred on the opposite side of a body of water. Freud, *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker. Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 9, ed. Anna Freud, Edward Bibring, and Ernst Kris (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986), 74-75.
[30] […*cum ei bene commendatum fuerit, signacula quidem rerum divinarum esse visibilia, sed res ipsas invisibiles in eis honorari*…]. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, ed. William Yorke Fausset (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), 75 (XXVI.50).

sich selbst zum Grunde liege."[31] A main point of this duality is that objects that are present and appear to us are signifi*cant* in so far as they are signifi*catory*, referring to something that is not present and does not appear to us, and that thereby furnishes the rest with meaning. This significance of the thing necessarily points to a dimension of meaning beyond itself, allowing meaning to become immanent after first manifesting itself in the limits of an encountered object. And sometimes (especially in modern poetry) the limit of the object *is* its meaning; thus it is a conjunction of beauty and sadness that Rilke finds in

> […] die Blumen, diese dem Irdischen treuen,
> denen wir Schicksal vom Rande des Schicksals leihn, –
> aber wer weiß es! Wenn sie ihr Welken bereuen,
> ist es an uns, ihre Reue zu sein.[32]

This basic structure is also at work in those scenes of modern German literature in which characters unexpectedly find themselves confronted by human remains in water—characters such as Malte Brigge as he looks at the face of an *Inconnue* that seems to be smiling "als wüßte es."

Just what kind of knowledge does this smile intimate? It is a question that has drawn philosophers as well as poets to the water's edge as a point of reference, as evidenced by the imagery that Edmund Husserl chose to invoke while outlining the asymmetrical relationship between the scope of our subjective experience and the capacities of our conscious perception:

> Auch ein Erlebnis ist nicht, und niemals, vollständig wahrgenommen, in seiner vollen Einheit ist es adäquat nicht faßbar. Es ist seinem Wesen nach ein Fluß, dem wir, den reflektiven Blick darauf richtend, von dem Jetztpunkte aus nachschwimmen können, während die zurückliegenden Strecken für die Wahrnehmung verloren sind.[33]

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[31] Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik*, in *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik I. Werkausgabe* Bd. V, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 183 (§32).
[32] Rilke, *Die Sonette an Orpheus* II, 14 (ln. 1-4), ibid., Bd. 2, 264.
[33] Husserl, "Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie (1913)," in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 3.1, ed. Walter Biemel (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), 103.

Years later, Hans Blumenberg contrasted Heraclitus' usage of the river metaphor (to signify metaphysical and cosmic flux) with Husserl's appropriation of it. In the latter, Blumenberg locates the idea that the human subject is not merely a "Zuschauer" of the objective world, but also and equally of his own subjectivity. At issue here is:

> […] nicht der Strom der Erscheinungen oder Tatsachen, in dem doch nur und erst die Dinge in Fluß gekommen sind, sondern der Strom des Bewußtseins. Da wird die Metapher des Stromes absolut für etwas, was wir uns, wegen seiner Nähe zu uns, seiner Identität mit uns selbst, am wenigsten begreifbar machen können, des Bewußtseins als des subjektiven Lebens selbst.[34]

When considered against this phenomenological context of water symbolism, what might the specific figural components of *drowning* signify? If in the narratives of German Realism it has indicated a certain "middle-space" of ethical action and temporal perception, what kind of middle-space might it indicate here? One possible answer, among many: the zone in which we press up against the border with that which is not part of us; and whatever is not part of us always implicitly communicates its ability to outlast us (whether or not this ends up being the case). Similarly, when the basic opposition between the subjective experience of nature—here metonymically represented by water—and the vast, uninhabitable position of nature itself becomes a topic of concern in modernist literature and art, nature at once seems no longer to be anthropomorphized or "embodied," no longer capable of hosting an imagined vantage that might return mankind's gaze, wonder, and concern; instead, nature is now simply *there*, and at once foreboding as a consequence.

This is the key link between the phenomenological and poetological applications of water imagery that arose alongside literary movements such as Expressionism, and it is a link that was anticipated by Fontane. In a fragment reflecting on the proper mode of narration, he offers the following metaphor:

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[34] Blumenberg, *Quellen, Ströme, Eisberge*, ed. Ulrich von Bülow and Dorit Krusche (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 108; 118-120.

> Wir müssen dem, was sich da vor uns vollzieht, in jedem Augenblick unter freudiger Zustimmung folgen können. Auf dies Folgen-können, kommt es an. Man gleitet in einem Kahn den Fluß hinunter, immer angeregt, immer befriedigt durch die Bilder am Ufer. Stockt die Fahrt, geräth der Kahn auf eine Sand-Bank, so darf dieser Zwischenfall nicht zu lange währen…[35]

If in German Realism the imagery of water is often bound up with the contingency of ethical decision, as we have seen it to be, for Fontane it can also represent the complications involved in a narrative successfully maintaining its hold on the reader's imagination. Just as the proper mode of narration should not falter or lapse for too long, so too should the proper object of such narration lend itself to this diegetic rhythm by belonging to the realm of comprehendible phenomena. In other words, water figurally implies a divide between that which can be represented and that which cannot. The Realist writer must contend with this boundary, seeking to avoid pauses in the currents and eddies of his narrative, and even more so to anchor the reader *above* the surface. To linger over what may or may not lie *beneath* the surface is to invoke what Fontane referred to in another essay as "das Nebelhafte, das Abgestorbene […] die Toten oder doch wenigstens das Tote," which should remain out of sight and out of mind (but which of course does not).[36]

What had merely been a subtle implication in Fontane's metaphor would become concrete and vivid by the first decades of the twentieth century. Within this span of time Ophelia had emerged as a salient trope, not only as the explicit subject of numerous poems but also as a poetological figure.[37] In the former case, the character of Ophelia is often cast as a melancholy bearer of the news that the de-idealized, pure materiality of the body is the only stable truth of human existence to have outlived the horrors of the

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[35] Fontane, "Die Kunst des Erzählens," in *Fragmente. Erzählungen, Impressionen, Essays* Bd. 1, ed. Christine Hehle and Hanna Delf von Wolzogen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 429 (underlining in the original).
[36] Fontane, "Unsere lyrische und epische Poesie seit 1848," in *Sämtliche Werke* Bd. 21.1, ed. Kurt Schreinert (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1963), 13-14.
[37] This is the view of critics such as Hanspeter Zürcher, who proposes that water motifs function within modernist lyric and painting according to either a "Narcissan" or an "Ophelian" structure, which reflect the artwork's creator and hermeneutic potentialities, respectively. Zürcher, *Stilles Wasser: Narziß und Ophelia in der Dichtung und Malerei um 1900* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1975).

Great War. In the latter case, we encounter the antipode of the Romantic *Wasserfrau*: in reflecting on the poetic process itself, writers no longer seem to conceptualize their craft as an entrance into the "hidden depths" of the subjective interior (and thereby also into communion with the unifying substance of nature, spirit, and imagination). Rather, the emphasis begins increasingly to be placed upon the act of retrieving those things that "come back to the surface" in order to reconcile oneself with their insistent materiality.[38]

This poetological development was by no means restricted to German-speaking lands (as is only natural given the seminal importance of figures like Shakespeare and Rimbaud for the German modernists). A powerful illustration of this fact can be found in the work of T. S. Eliot. Water, and particularly the imagery of seafaring and its hazards, appears with remarkable consistency throughout his oeuvre, from relatively early points such as part IV of *The Waste Land* (1922) in which we are told of how the drowned sailor Phlebas at last "Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / And the profit and loss" of the world above the surface.[39] A similar note is sounded by the dying father in "Marina" (1930) who likens his own fading presence to a battered ship, and—most clearly—by the speaker of "The Dry Salvages" in *Four Quartets* (1941) who conjures a nocturnal moment at sea in which "The tolling bell / Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried / Ground swell, […]"[40] It is a moment of internal awareness that everything we have ever experienced time to consist in has never had any bearing upon anything beyond the narrow edges of our inhabited vantage, and will come to an end along with us, once we can no longer continue

[38] Anna Maria Stuby, as noted above, conceptualizes this motivic evolution as a "Flutwelle" of repressed cultural and aesthetic representations of femininity, writing: "Sind es in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts zunächst noch überwiegend Nixen, Najaden, Nymphen, die in dieser Flut ihr eigenwilliges Spielchen treiben, so ist es in der zweiten Hälfte [eine] Verlagerung der Perspektive zu beobachten: die unberechenbare, Angst und Lust einflößende Bewegung des quicklebendigen Nixleins, wird fixiert im Bild der in jungfräulich-bräutlicher Schönheit im Wasser aufgebahrten, weiblichen Wasserleiche." Stuby, *Liebe, Tod und Wasserfrau*, 185-186.
[39] Eliot, "Death by Water," in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot* Vol. 1 *The Collected and Uncollected Poems*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 67 (ln. 313-314).
[40] Ibid., 194 (ln. 35-37)

Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel
And piece together the past and the future,
Between midnight and dawn, […]
[…] before the morning watch
When time stops and time is never ending;
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,
Clangs
The bell.[41]

However, Eliot not only suffused his poems with water imagery, but invoked the specific theme of submergence as an illustration of how the creative process itself functions. In his concluding Norton Lecture (31 March 1933), Eliot remarks how often poems address the scenario of their own composition as one of "mystical inspiration." He goes on to say, however, that poetry of this sort is not to be understood so much as a *positive* event of inspiration being visited upon the poet by a muse or other external agent, but instead as a *negative* instance of the poet's quotidian, internal barriers being dismantled in order to reveal what lies beneath them—and has lain there all along. Moreover, what lends a poem its particular quality is not the conditions of its enunciation (whether "mystical" or not), but rather an image that has been incubated within the poet after entering her or his psyche—consciously or unconsciously, through intertextual influence or personal experience—and then "sinking" to the depths of the subjective interior, beyond the reaches of memory and cognition, before eventually "re-surfacing."

Eliot takes Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1816) as an example, writing that "the imagery of that fragment…sank to the depths of Coleridge's feeling, was saturated, transformed there…and brought up into daylight again."[42] The heart of poeïsis is this species of image that has been "saturated while it lay in the depths of…memory" and that "will rise like Anadyomene from the sea" as a "reborn image":

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[41] Ibid. (ln. 41-48).
[42] Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1932-1933)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 139.

> I suggest that what gives [this imagery] such intensity as it has in each case is its saturation…with feelings too obscure for the authors to know quite what they were […] The song of one bird, the leap of one fish, at a particular place and time, the scent of one flower […] such memories may have a symbolic value, but of what we cannot tell, for they represent the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer.[43]

~

Eliot's poetology of submergence and resurfacing provides us with a fitting place to end because its dialectic[44] illustrates precisely the two essential "movements" that the drowning motif performs in German literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the narratives of German Realism, as we have seen, when characters vanish beneath the water's surface following an "Augenblick" of sacrificial decision, it symbolically highlights the fluid threshold between the realm of law and communal existence, on the one hand, and that of subjective experience, on the other. However, by beginning our study with Goethe's Ottilie and ending with Ophelia, we have also been able to catch a glimpse of how German writers after 1900 become less concerned with the instant of submergence than with the implications of "resurfacing."

As he had done with Ottilie, Goethe once again foreshadows this aesthetic trend. As he recounts in his letter to Charlotte von Stein from 19 January 1778, after Christel von Laßberg is discovered in the river Ilm he helps with the work of shoveling earth to make room for her memorial, laboring into the night. He alludes vaguely to the "Erinnerungen und Gedancken" that have plagued him in the intervening days and evenings (his journal describes him as having spent this time "In stiller Trauer […] beschäfftigt um die Scene des Todts").[45] Goethe then draws his brief letter to a close with the reflection that "Diese einladende Trauer hat was gefährlich anziehendes wie das

[43] Ibid., 140-141.
[44] Cf. Jewel Spears Brooker, *T. S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), esp. 1-11, 74-89.
[45] Goethe, *Tagebücher. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe im Auftrag der Stiftung Weimarer Klassik*: Bd. 1.1, ed. Wolfgang Albrecht and Andreas Döhler (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1998), 60 [18. Januar 1778].

Wasser selbst, und der Abglanz der Sterne des Himmels der aus beyden leuchtet lockt uns."

These final lines present a convergence of natural elements with human feeling—feeling instigated by the encounter not with a fellow mind, but with a lifeless body on the riverbank. Goethe's representation of the subjective interior via the medium of the natural environment—and water in particular—anticipates what the symbolism of drowning configures after German Realism. Fittingly, the events surrounding Laßberg's death also form a counterpoint to Ottilie in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* through their affinity with the core facet of the Ophelia topos in modernist German literature: namely, its re-focusing of the narrative gaze upon the remains that return to us and thereby reinforce how simultaneously close yet un-moveable this boundary is. Nevertheless, we never tire in our attempts to traverse it, with all literal and literary means known to us. Perhaps it is no coincidence that it was this particular predilection of ours that Sophocles had his Chorus of Thebes cite as an illustration of what makes us so essentially "*deinos*"—both wondrous and terrible.

> πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοὐδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει.
> τοῦτο καὶ πολιοῦ πέραν πόντου χειμερίῳ νότῳ
> χωρεῖ, περιβρυχίοισιν
> περῶν ὑπ᾽ οἴδμασιν.[46]
>
> *Ungeheuer ist viel. Doch nichts*
> *Ungeheuerer als der Mensch.*
> *Denn der, über die Nacht*
> *Des Meers, wenn gegen den Winter wehet*
> *Der Südwind, fähret er aus*
> *In geflügelten sausenden Häußern.*[47]
>
> *Among the many wonders of the world*
> *Where is the equal of this creature, man?*
> *First he was shivering on the shore in skins,*
> *Or paddling a dug-out, terrified of drowning.*
> *Then he took up oars, put tackle on a mast*
> *And steered himself by the stars through the gales.*[48]

[46] Sophocles, *Ἀντιγόνη* (ln. 334-337).
[47] Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Trauerspiele des Sophokles. Antigonae*, in *Sämtliche Werke. Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe* Bd. 5, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1952), 219.
[48] Seamus Heaney, *The Burial at Thebes* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004), 24.

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