

POST-REVOLUTIONARY GERMAN LITERATURE 1848-
1888: TRACING LIBERALISM THROUGH GERMAN
LITERARY REALISM

by

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This thesis aims to use literature to prove the existence of a political culture of liberalism within German-speaking society following the failed revolution of 1848. A political culture conveys the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings that provide the groundwork, underlying assumptions, and rules about a society or individual's behavior within a political system. In pursuit of this goal, the thesis draws on the method of surface reading author's works and their historical biographies. Since the authors inhabited reactionary regimes which utilized censorship to expunge the politics of liberalism, expressions of the political culture of liberalism through literature represented both a revolution from these conservative governments and a model for society to escape such a system. The German literary realists employed unique themes in their writings, but they shared the general liberal themes of *Bildung*, labor, freedom, and class distinctions. This study offers three authors with geographic and biographic diversity, who hailed from all over the German-speaking world: Prussia, Denmark, and Austria. The authors Gustav Freytag, Theodor Storm, and Adalbert Stifter helped establish and preserve a national political culture of liberalism predating political unification while avoiding censorship by their conservative regimes.

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Introduction

Background

In 1848, liberals organized revolutions across the German-speaking world. Enraged by years of censorship and a lack of representation in their governments, and inspired by similar revolutions across Europe, they looked to the political ideology of liberalism: liberty, equality of rights, and consent to government. Uprisings, petitions, and a National Assembly in Frankfurt all tried to uproot the status quo. The primary goal was to establish a representative form of government to unite the German States. The liberal movement detested the disorganization and oppression of the German Confederation: thirty-nine independent states, most ruled by monarchs and the landed nobility. Revolutionaries attempted to create a national constitution and democratically unite the German states. Unfortunately, most of these revolutions, especially those in German-speaking Europe, failed to achieve their aims. Though a majority of German intellectuals favored economic freedom, personal liberty, and the end of the aristocracy, factional divides among radical democrats, socialists, and bourgeois liberals impeded the progress of the National Assembly and eventually caused its collapse.¹ This defeat disheartened liberals across Germany, but though their writings were heavily censored in the years following the revolution, they retained their beliefs and looked for other avenues to express them.

¹ Hans J. Hahn *The 1848 Revolutions in German-speaking Europe*. Harlow, England; New York: Longman, 2001. Print. Themes in Modern German History Ser. 67

This research asks the question: what happened to liberal intellectuals and the culture of liberalism after the failure of 1848-49? The purpose of this study is to examine the literature from writers of the Post-Revolutionary period to uncover insights into the development of the political culture of liberalism at the time. A political culture conveys the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings that provide the groundwork, underlying assumptions, and rules about a society or individual's behavior in a political system. Also, this movement affected German-speaking people from all walks of life, as each author emphasized bottom-up liberalism. When this study refers to liberalism, it is referring to this political culture, and not liberalism as it refers to the disciplines of politics and philosophy (unless specified).

This investigation focuses on the 1850s and 1860s, an understudied period in German history. Other historical studies characterized this period as a sudden disenchantment with liberalism following the failed revolutions, accompanied by a rise of nationalism and a surge in progressive industrialization. Some liberals saw national unity and strength as their only democratic opportunity and compromised with the reactionary conservative establishment. Others recoiled entirely from politics to focus on profiting from the free-trade capitalism being implemented in their states' economies. While it is true that this period saw little reform in the political structure of the German states, it saw an explosion of easily accessible literature, fueled by the spread of newspapers, periodicals, novels, and novellas into the public sphere. Novels,

especially, illuminated the musings of creative liberal intellectuals barred or discouraged from political speech by the reactionary censorship of the time.²

Romanticism, the primary literary movement of the 18th and early 19th century, had emphasized individualism, emotion, aesthetics, and medieval cultural unity. As the older generation died out, however, young Germans became more interested in stories about the modern reality of everyday life. In the 1830s and 40s, the *Junges Deutschland* (Young Germany) movement expressed hope for a united democratic German state by describing the grim reality of the German confederation. The writings of *Junges Deutschland* (from authors such as Karl Gutzkow, Heinrich Laube, and Theodor Mundt) were banned in the Frankfurt Federal Convention as early as 1835. Many participated in the revolutions of 1848, creating a temporary alliance between political and literary means of expression. After the failure of 1848, the movement fractured with the death of its political motivation and its authors scattered in exile across Europe.

With the sobering realization that came with defeat in 1849, many liberal authors felt that a unified German democracy remained far out of reach. As reality did not live up to their ideals, a new movement emerged. This movement, called German literary Realism, built on the foundations of the *Junges Deutschland* movement and distinguished itself from the romantics. German Realism has also been called *Bürgerlicher Realismus* (bourgeois realism) or *Poetischer Realismus* (poetic realism);

² Censorship of newspapers would go on, but the censorship of published fiction like novels fell dramatically as seen in the study of Hesse-Kassel in Frederik Ohles *Germany's Rude Awakening: Censorship in the Land of the Brothers Grimm*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1992. Print. 166

each term recognizes a key aspect of the movement. German Realism has been used as a catch-all term for this marriage of poetic and realistic literature, and its works incorporate both the poetic idealized fictional worlds with a realistic depiction of *bürgerlich* life. *Bürgertum* was the German term referring to the burgeoning middle class or bourgeois and *bürgerlich* is the related adjective. Thus, depending on the author, characters and themes can be a combination of fairytale-like idealization and prosaic realism. This compromise is unique to literary realism, and it strongly distinguishes the movement from the literary movements before and after. For the purposes of this study, the terms literary realism and German realism will be used interchangeably to refer to this movement as a whole.

Realism diverged from romanticism by focusing on the everyday lives of ordinary people, including the triumphs and injustices of life in the German Confederation. At the same time, it represented a reaction to the more prosaic realistic movement taking place in France led by authors like Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Flaubert which reflected the true nature of the world as if seen through a microscope, without symbolic or metaphorical interpretations.³ These works included criminal or otherwise gruesome depictions of urban life with an abundance of street slang. German realists, holding onto their poetic and artistic roots rejected this form of prosaic realism. German realists chose instead to focus on *bürgerlich* or bourgeois characters and plots, often incorporating their somewhat romantic poeticism for inherent artistic value.⁴

³ William E. Burgwinkle et al., "Realism," in *The Cambridge History of French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 461-470, 462.

⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica The Project Gutenberg EBook of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition, Volume 11, Slice 7. 798

Thus, German realism compromised realistic elements and poetic elements motivated by the political impetus of the revolution of 1848 and its consequences.

With plots focusing on the homeland, nature, and the individual, the German realists focused on failures within the social and cultural fabric of society rather than political systems. Masked in the guise of fiction, literature served as a primary mode for intellectual discussion in this period of reactionary politics. Through literature, realist authors examined themes which a liberal culture must confront such as *Bildung* (gaining personal, financial, and social growth through philosophy and education), labor, class distinctions, humanism (emphasizing the value of human beings), and nature. And through such themes, they addressed political issues like capitalist free trade, personal liberty, the rising *Bürgertum* (bourgeoisie), and the waning aristocracy.

The literary method was more effective than simply criticizing the aristocracy and praising the *Bürgertum*. Realist authors used themes of injustice, tragedy, and personal triumph to draw the reader into their narratives. They painted a relatable picture of mid-century Germany, modeling for the reader how to enact positive change for themselves and on their surroundings. The works themselves are not political nor philosophical. Instead, they provide a cultural commentary that incites and models social change for the readers rather than offers a concrete solution. Through this method, literary realists kept the embers of the liberal movement burning long after the revolution died out. The liberal movement began in political speech, but it continued through fictional narratives. That movement, led by authors such as Gustav Freytag

(1816-1895), Theodor Storm (1817-1888), and Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868), is the subject of this thesis.

These three authors have been chosen for their prolific writing and shared themes within different biographical contexts. All three authors participated in some political activity during the revolutions of 1848 but found success only through their literary contributions thereafter. All three left their homes after the revolution because of reactionary crackdowns on political dissidents. They did not, however, recant or hide their liberal beliefs. In fact, they maintained their underlying cultural commitment to liberalism by consolidating their belief systems into accessible literary themes. The failure of the political revolutions of 1848 was partially due to a failure of cultural unity, one which many believed would take a long period of consolidation and unification of the German people. In 1848, though the German people wanted change in their respective regimes, they were philosophically and culturally diverse, and so unable to create a unified democratic constitution. Post-revolutionary writing attempted to build a sturdier cultural foundation, that could better incite political change and unify the German cultural consciousness. These authors saw the prospect of this literature blossoming into another, more unified and successful, liberal movement, though they undoubtedly disagreed on the basis of that movement.

The literary realism movement may not have sparked political changes, but its popularity certainly did not hinder reforms. Had the revolution of 1848 led to a retreat and disinterest in the politics of liberalism, or at least democracy, as some historians

argue⁵, the reforms of the 1860s would not have taken place. In 1860, Austria ceased their single-party absolutism and created an electoral system which favored the *Bürgertum*.⁶ In Germany, organizations like the Nationalverein (National Union) and the Reformverein (reform union) petitioned their governments successfully to replace conservative officials with moderates and argue for more transparency in government affairs.⁷ These decisions were highly popular, indicating a rising national sentiment of representation in government. Bismarck used his position as Prime Minister to end the constitutional conflict by uniting the *Bürgertum* with the military and establishing a national parliament that would not interfere with the monarch's authority.⁸ Many liberals, as well as some of the authors mentioned in this study, were disappointed with preserving monarchical power and maintaining the aristocracy. Their reactions to these reforms are also tracked within the following study, which aims to convey both their goals and misgivings for the future of the German state. Without studying the underground political movements of the time, the literature which was highly popular provides a good indicator of the popular liberal sentiment in German-speaking Europe.

The conclusion of this study proves that literature can not only be a tool for understanding socio-historical trends, but it could also be the missing link to locate

⁵ David Blackbourne argues that liberal beliefs still enjoyed “cross-class support” in German society 10 years on from the March revolutions. However, many of the democratic ideals of those revolutions, like universal male suffrage, had been all but expunged from the movement in the preceding decade. David Blackbourn. *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. 234

⁶ William Carr. *The Origins of the Wars of German Unification*. Origins of Modern Wars. London; New York: Longman, 1991. 115-116

⁷K J. Leyser, “The 1860s: The Triumphs of Bismarck,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., May 5, 2021).

⁸ Ibid

dissent in a land overwhelmed by political censorship. Beyond indicating the popular sentiment of liberal intellectuals, these works of literature provided a robust counterculture against the conservative nationalism which would permeate German politics during their time and in the years to come. The authors maintained their liberal themes despite the practical failure of 1848, and in doing so, they kept alive the ideals of that revolution within the world of fiction. While historians criticize the movement for its inability to enact real political change, its effects on the cultural consciousness of Germany were significant and lasting. German literary realism and its authors present a counterargument to the *Sonderweg* thesis. Rather than a destiny of nationalism, warmongering, and autocracy because of faults in its cultural development, realism vindicates German culture, proving that as much as any other European country, it supported education, freedom, and self-determination. These authors represented the liberal-progressive cultural movement, and their words influenced generations of German liberals. Even in the darkest days of German political history, its people found solace in the timeless and hopeful words of these authors.

The Authors

Each chapter will address one of the three authors: Gustav Freytag, Theodor Storm, and Adalbert Stifter. Each of these authors has been chosen for their unique geographical, political, and literary inspiration. This study presents each author's biography alongside their literary works. This allows us to gauge the influence of their geographical, political, and social context on their writing. Each author's investigation runs chronologically, with select major works aligning with moments from their life

story. By emphasizing the triumphs and pitfalls of each authors' life, we might see their humanity and better understand their political views. Mention of Freytag's racism, Storm's affair with a young girl, and Stifter's tragic first love and failures in child-rearing contribute to a more complete picture of these authors and their contexts. Special emphasis has been given to ensuring some works and life are analyzed before and after the revolution of 1848. Finally, the investigation shifts to analyzing one key work from each author at the peak of their literary style along with the purest representation of their liberal ideology in their literature. This investigation will use these narratives to comment on the similarities and differences among the writers' works within the shared context of German cultural liberalism. This investigation will evaluate each author's contributions qualitatively based on the extent to which they shed light on the traditional ideals of the culture of liberalism movement and those of their peers. Then, it will characterize each author generally in both their political and literary writing, and come up with an answer to the question: to what extent did their writing maintain their liberal beliefs?

Gustav Freytag (1816-1895) embodies a convergence between liberal intellectual and *bürgerlich* Prussian nationalist. He began writing during the *Junges Deutschland* movement and shared many of their ideals, but he first came to national prominence rejecting them in his periodical with Julian Schmidt *Die Grenzboten* in the years following their failures in the 1848 revolution.⁹ He was primarily concerned with nationalism and liberalism in growing the industrial capacity of Germany and finding

⁹ James J. Sheehan, *German History 1770-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 2008). 820

strength through shared labor. Though his peers classified his political views as liberal, Freytag also held strong ethnonationalist views about German superiority. While he praises the *Bürgertum* German merchant class, he denigrates Jewish and Slavic characters in his famous novel *Soll und Haben* (1855). In this book, the young Anton learns in his *Bildung* that there is more to life than making money and that financial success cannot be a substitute for morality. This success story contrasts his Jewish childhood friend Vietel Itzig, who cheats and lies his way into wealth and meets a tragic end. Keeping in mind his unique geographical and political situation, Freytag should still be considered a moderate liberal. His primary complaint was with the aristocracy and those who wished to hinder German *bürgerlich* merchants. Similarly, his primary goal was an economically powerful and united Germany under Prussian supremacy which would benefit the rising *Bürgertum* class (which he was a part of).

Theodor Storm (1817-1888) was born and raised in the contested Danish region Schleswig-Holstein, though he always identified as German. Like Freytag, he began as a strong believer in the *kleindeutsch* (Prussian-backed small German unification) solution and in the people's ability to choose their political representation. His political views centered around humanism, liberalism, and social mobility through *Bildung*. He expressed these views through his work (founding choral societies and helping others as a lawyer) and in his writing. His novellas represent these political ideals while disclosing themes of romance, family life, and the homeland. His writing often contained lyrical poetry akin to the late romantics, as they were his primary inspiration. His novellas, though realistic in setting and plot, contained many passages deemed an

irrelevant luxury by other literary realists.¹⁰ While his novellas appear stylistically romantic, they are thematically similar to other literary realists. *Der Schimmelreiter* (1888), his last published work, reflects on past and present social dynamics while conveying the tragic social rise of a dikemaster in a coastal Friesian town. The story emphasizes the importance of education and rationality in creating an equitable liberal society, as the superstitious, distrustful, and overly competitive townspeople impede the dikemaster's attempts at improving their dikes and society. Storm's tale makes an analogy to the failed 1848 revolution, and why it stagnated in the sectionalism of small towns. Storm's writing also relates the long-held belief that while the German nationalist movement took hold in Prussia and various high circles, many small towns still used regional identifiers even after the unification.

Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868), although he lived and worked in Vienna and then Linz, Austria, remained spiritually close to the Bohemian forests of his childhood. His works explored themes of *Bildung*, family, love, and personal growth through a connection with and conquest of nature. His works *Brigitta* (1844) and *Der Nachsommer* (1857) represent these themes while providing an intriguing aristocracy-inspired retreat *Bildung*. *Brigitta* tells the reader the value of family life and reason while showing the common liberal theme of taming nature for modernity. The story also decries excessive passion and rash judgments, which connect to Stifter's real views of the revolutionaries in the years leading up to 1848. In *Der Nachsommer*, through detailed descriptions of art and Biedermeier furniture, Stifter offers both praise and

¹⁰ David A. Jackson. Theodor Storm: *The Life and Works of a Democratic Humanitarian*. Monographs in German Literature. New York: Berg, 1992. Print. 70

critique of urban *Bürgertum* liberalism. *Der Nachsommer* is also a non-traditional *Bildungsroman* that offers key insights into Stifter's views on family structure and self-cultivation. Finally, it aligns itself more with nature than any of Stifter's previous works, both in structure and setting, providing several lessons about the importance of nature in liberal and intellectual pursuits. The themes of *Bildung*, love, and conquering nature articulate Stifter's lifetime liberal aspirations, and with the novel coming so close to his suicide, it reads like an autobiographical musing on the failed Austrian democratic movement and a model for all that he stood for in his life.

Historiography

This study is relevant to the historiography because it reiterates the importance of literature in the study of liberalism with reference to the Post-Revolutionary period. This method, though standardized with regards to general history, has not been applied to this period as frequently. With so much focus on political trends, historians can overlook social trends and cultural dissent. Though it is important to understand the organized political and social revolutions of 1848-49, little attention has been paid to the following intellectual revolt (albeit reserved) through print media. And when historians do explore media trends, they often emphasize the influence of newspapers and periodicals. For example, the liberal periodical *Die Gartenlaube* was founded by radical liberal publisher Ernst Keil. The Leipzig periodical ran political articles alongside fiction and illustrations from 1853 to the 20th century and was politically committed to the creation of a democratic national government and a broadly educated population. Kirsten Belgum described how the periodical "popularized the nation"

while Matthew Fitzpatrick described its influence in creating a “nineteenth-century liberal expansionism” in Germany.¹¹ Periodicals like *Die Gartenlaube* or *Illustrierte Zeitung* relay similar themes to literature but must be studied more rigorously because of their many authors and volumes. Also, because this period saw significant censorship of newspapers, it marks a watershed for exploring the influence of a less often censored media: literature.

This study also reveals the importance of recognizing politically motivated literary movements. While political histories of this period have not focused much on the influence of literature, so too have literary histories not focused on the cultural and social effects of literature of populations. Much of the literary historians cited in this study limited themselves to a few works done by one of the authors. They combined biography and major works to conclude that a certain author’s work was influenced by their context. This study, by collecting three author’s works from vastly different geographic contexts, provides insight into a larger cultural movement: liberalism through literature. This political culture movement took place across the borders of a nation whose political unification long postdated its cultural coalescence.

Using literature to illustrate historical trends can lead to a conflict between author and narrator. Though these works reflect their authors’ ideas, it can be argued that their fictional narratives hold no bearing on trends in the real world of the time. To

¹¹ Matthew Fitzpatrick. "Narrating Empire: "Die Gartenlaube" and Germany's Nineteenth-Century Liberal Expansionism." *German Studies Review* 30, no. 1 (2007): 97-120.
And Kirsten Belgum. *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity in Die Gartenlaube, 1853-1900*. Modern German Culture and Literature. Lincoln [Nebraska]: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

avoid that conflict, a specific methodology must be articulated and utilized. For one, literary analysis cannot be extrapolated to explain general historical trends. So, the novels' plots and recurrent themes must be supplemented with each author's biography. This study necessitates a combination of both traditional historical sources and literary sources. There are dangers to either an overreliance on historical analysis or literary analysis, so this study relies on sources from both realms. In general, it will utilize literary materials, but such analysis will be approached from a historical perspective.

Literary study utilizes novels, novellas, and poems, as well as literary analysis and criticism. The study will compare each author in terms of their subjects and basic themes. With an explicit goal of unearthing historical conclusions, the study dedicates less space to in-depth literary analysis and focuses on the conclusions which would be perceptible to the average reader during the period. My primary method of literary analysis is thus surface reading, which aims to ascertain "what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts."¹² This method is especially helpful when trying to unearth commonalities among authors in terms of plot, themes, and characters. This was also the primary method used in a recent study of Adalbert Stifter and others by Erik J. Grell: "Liberal Affect and Literary Culture." An author's intention should not be assumed because of the possible consequence of conflating the narrator with the author. Furthermore, the in-depth literary analysis models which aim to unearth an author's intention are beyond the scope of this primarily historical investigation. Surface reading is therefore the best method for allowing each author's work to speak for itself,

¹² Grell, E.J. (2015), *Homoerotic Travel, Classical Bildung, and Liberal Allegory in Adalbert Stifter's Brigitta (1844–47)*. *The German Quarterly*, 88: doi:10.1111/gequ.10247. 515

irrespective of intention. Combining the surface reading method with biographical and contextual history can unearth the narrative and implications of each author's works for their readers which will provide insight into the development of political culture.

Past treatments of this period of German history have utilized literature to supplement historical study. James J. Sheehan's *German History 1770-1866* mentions all three authors in its chapter on "Revolution and Reaction." He characterizes Freytag as a staunch supporter of literary realism from his writing in the liberal periodical *Die Grenzboten*: "Freytag believed that realism 'in art, science, religion, and politics is nothing other than the first cultural stage of a new generation, which seeks to spiritualize every aspect of contemporary life in order to give new content to sensibilities.'" ¹³ He wrote that Stifter perfectly characterized how the literary realists stood apart from every other generation of European writers who tried, each in their own way, to "reconcile inner drives and external necessities, individual ambition and social possibility." Stifter believed self-control, and constraint of one's passion and desire, causes them to realize their own freedom and potential. ¹⁴ Both Stifter and Freytag, Sheehan believes, helped create and epitomized the literary realism movement which led to a revolution in popular literature and media. Although he mentions their ties to the liberal movement, he refrains from making any concrete arguments about how their writing reflected their prior liberal tendencies. Furthermore, he does not investigate how their writing perpetuated a growing political culture of liberal ideals. This study does not mean to refute Sheehan's conclusions, but to supplement the

¹³ Sheehan *German History, 1770-1866*. 821

¹⁴ *Ibid* 831

historical story of literary realism by unearthing how each author maintained their liberal ideals through their writing careers.

In *Building a National Literature* (1989), Peter Uwe Hohendahl established a method of extraliterary analysis outside of focusing on individual texts and themes. His investigation relied on the general trends within literary analysis and criticism of German literature, and specifically how those trends pointed in the direction of creating a national identity in the period following the revolution of 1848. He used essays, criticism, and histories from that time to back up this claim. Comparing how the influential minds of the 1850s and 60s saw a development in national literature. But because he references many Mid-19th century historians like Georg Gottfried Gervinus and Karl von Hegel who wrote about 18th century authors like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Friedrich Schiller, most of his literary sources predate the Nachmärz period (the 1850s-).¹⁵ His scope does include Nachmärz writers like Gustav Freytag and Gottfried Keller, but it stops short of analyzing their novels as primary sources, instead using their opinions on past literature expressed in essays and other publications.

The approach taken in this study has much in common with Hohendahl's, though it adds the political culture theme of liberalism, shifts the time period to the Nachmärz writers, and focuses on only a few key authors. The limited scope provides insight into the multifaceted nature of the authors and their works. Instead of gleaming a few ideas from works done by many authors, this study analyzes a few authors to

¹⁵ Peter Uwe Hohendahl. *Building a National Literature: The Case of Germany, 1830-1870*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989. Print. 116

clarify their expressions of political ideals. To articulate the changes in the period more closely, the scope of the investigation is when the authors were writing, not when their work was being analyzed and critiqued like Hohendahl's. Hohendahl's history also implicates many political developments, namely the reactionary conservative movement which tried to separate literature from politics.¹⁶ This study will diverge from Hohendahl's methods by grounding itself firmly within the lives of the aforementioned German realist authors: their biographies, correspondence, and literary works. It will not expend much effort on analyzing literary criticism unless such criticism is vital to the understanding of such works. To prove the existence of liberal culture within their works, the analysis must remain tied to the works themselves.

Finally, though the focus of this study rests primarily with liberalism, nationalism plays an important supporting role in all three author's views for the future. The unification and cooperation of a nation-state provide a safeguard for the kind of liberal rights and qualities held dear by many liberals. The authors manifest this by trying to draw national lines between similar characters in their writing, though they sometimes point out that small towns perpetuated regionalism. Hohendahl's investigation of nationalism is useful as a guide for navigating the literature of the period and his characterizations of various authors within and beyond this investigation's scope will be useful along with Sheehan's as models for how to write about literature from the perspective of a historian. This study will compromise the two

¹⁶ Hohendahl. *Building a National Literature*. 212

by letting the literary works speak for themselves but supplementing their analysis with historical context.

The last 30 years have also seen several detailed studies of each of the authors, which are useful to ground this thesis's interpretations within the larger historiography. In his 1992 literary biography: *Theodor Storm: The Life and Works of a Democratic Humanitarian*, David A. Jackson takes an individualized account of literary responses to political and social issues. His in-depth analysis of Storm's writing and context undermines the narrative that Storm wrote "fatalistically" about "democratic, humanitarian Germany."¹⁷ Many studies have used literary realism's failure in hindsight to suggest that the hope of the 1840s was dashed by political failures and social apathy. Though Jackson explores some connections with Storm's peers, his focus does remain firmly grounded within Storm's writing. In this study, the authors will not be examined within a vacuum, and there will be space allocated to investigate Storm's dialogue with peers. This is the strength of collating three different authors and their works: revealing a trend in popular writing. As further studies demonstrate, though Storm and his peers felt alienated in their ideas, they often agreed with one another. If such dialogue was extensive, it might be characterized as the beginnings of an underground literary counterculture.

Larry L. Ping's 2006 book *Gustav Freytag and the Prussian Gospel* attempts to demonstrate this interaction among German literary realists. Ping characterizes Freytag as a "member of the politically active elite of academic historians and liberal publicists

¹⁷ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 9

who wrote in the service of the national cause.”¹⁸ In doing so, he utilizes Freytag’s published writing as well as his correspondence with peers. This examination of the man both on the page and behind the press allows a more complete picture of a figure who is often controversial among German literary critics. Though Freytag’s support of antisemitism, nationalism, and Prussian supremacy seem to overshadow his liberal beliefs, Ping believes that he was still decidedly liberal in his support of freedom of speech and representative democracy. Freytag paraded his liberal beliefs through persistent political and literary writing. This study recognizes Freytag’s version of liberalism as decidedly exclusionary while Stifter’s and Storm’s might be characterized as inclusionary or humanistic. However, this form of liberalism was more popular at the time in Germany. Rather than Freytag’s beliefs being aberrations on the liberal model, they represent the biases of many liberals who didn’t see their ideals nearly as egalitarian as we might view them now with respect to the modern sense of liberalism. With his narratives and discrimination, Freytag appealed both to the leaders of the empire and those who lived under it. He was the most successful of the three authors, achieving a significance akin to a German Charles Dickens. So, though Ping is less critical of Freytag’s exclusionary liberalism, he is right to put him at the forefront of the liberal movement, at least in terms of exposure and influence. He, perhaps more than any other author, brought the ideas of *Bürgertum*, *Bildung*, and national labor into the minds of Germans.

¹⁸ Larry L Ping. *Gustav Freytag and the Prussian Gospel: Novels, Liberalism, and History*. North American Studies in Nineteenth-century German Literature; v. 37. Oxford; New York: P. Lang, 2006. 608

This thesis will incorporate well into the existing literature, but with a few distinguishing features. Like Ping and Jackson, it will utilize the methods of biographical literary analysis while emphasizing historical context. Like Hohendahl, though, it will attempt to identify a movement of the political culture of liberalism in literature that connects these three writers. Still, one cannot ignore each writer's unique geographic contexts, biography, and opinions. Therefore, this thesis represents a compilation of Ping, Jackson, and other detailed studies. The synthesis of these studies, along with each author's biography and analysis of the literary works themselves, leads to sweeping new discoveries about the liberal undertones of the literary realism movement. Such a synthesis of German literary realism has not been attempted in many years, perhaps not since Walter Silz's excellent—albeit outdated—*Realism and Reality; Studies in the German Novelle of Poetic Realism* (1954). This work focused on categorizing the German novella more specifically within the literary form of realism. It situates the novella as the perfect combination of German realism's realistic and poetic elements.¹⁹ Silz oversight comes from a refusal to incorporate any longer (and sometimes more iconic) works like *Soll und Haben* or *Der Nachsommer*, though they also conform to these attributes of literary realism.

This study revitalizes the literary synthesis model in historical writing using the new lens of political culture. The analytical aspect of the study, which draws on all three authors and their different backgrounds, provides the evidence for the larger

¹⁹ Walter Silz. *Realism and Reality; Studies in the German Novelle of Poetic Realism*. University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures; No. 11. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954.

conclusions about lingering cultural themes of liberalism represented in literature. The writings of these authors all share themes and ideals which conform to their past political opinions. Each of the above studies has hypothesized that authors of literary realism shared certain liberal ideals, but none try to prove outright the existence of such a movement. This study will prove that the authors of literary realism did not use literature as a retreat from the political sphere, but instead as a method of compiling and clarifying their ideals in literary themes for posterity and future use in German politics.

Gustav Freytag: The Ideal *Bürgertum* and Exclusionary Liberalism

Gustav Freytag was born in Kreuzburg, Silesia in 1816. He studied philology (literary criticism) in Berlin and Breslau, writing his dissertation on “The beginnings of dramatic poetry among the Germans.”²⁰ After an eight-year stint as a professor in Breslau, he devoted his time to writing. He was interested in liberalism and nationalism and reacted strongly towards the Revolution of 1848. His weekly liberal journal *Die Grenzboten* (the Border Messengers) with Julian Schmidt, first published in Leipzig in 1848, became influential for its discussion of politics and literature directed at *bürgerlich* German liberals. His narrative works including *Soll und Haben* (1855 “Debit and Credit”) exhibit realistic attention to detail, colorful characters, and humor. He published plays later in his life as well as the five-volume cultural history *Bilder Aus der Deutschen Vergangenheit* (1859-1862). Achieving similar popularity to Charles Dickens in England, he was showered with honors until his death in 1895.

Gustav Freytag is one of the most central and lasting figures in literary realism. He began writing of the movement as early as 1848, promoting it in *Die Grenzboten*. He believed that realism ‘in art, science, religion, and politics is nothing other than the first cultural stage of a new generation, which seeks to spiritualize every aspect of contemporary life in order to give new content to sensibilities.’²¹ Freytag was a staunch and vocal defender of literary realism, which he argued was a perfect replacement of the old Catholic and medievalist romanticism.²² He argued for a compromise between realistic and poetic art forms, one which was grounded in the real but where “the work

²⁰ Gustav Freytag Entry, *1911 Encyclopedia Britannica* (University of Cambridge: UK)

²¹ Sheehan. *German History 1770-1866*. 821

²² *Ibid*

of art was to create a totality reaching beyond the empirical elements of reality.”²³ He believed that the mid-century rise of industry and the *Bürgertum* had changed the social landscape of German society, necessitating a more realistic and approachable form of literary writing.

He wrote in an essay that the Revolutions of 1848 “gave the Volk a share in the state and brought each individual into a hundredfold new contacts with the mainstream of our cultural life.”²⁴ Though he was also a prominent playwright, he believed that literature was the perfect tool for merging the world of the ideal with that of the real. He often deliberated on *das Wahre* or the positive essence which one could extract from even the most pessimistic views of the present. In the age of transition, the 1850s and 60s, he tried to poeticize and idealize the present, while remaining firmly grounded in realism. His writings carry little critique of the *Bürgertum* or the system of capitalism, reserving only minor criticism for the *Junker* aristocrats like the inept Baron von Rothsattel in *Soll und Haben*. Though he does seem to allocate some space for these aristocrats, as after being taught the value of hard work and *bürgerlich* business practices they will be able to extend that Prussian influence over the colonized peasantry. The idealized world in which his *Bildung* tales take place paints a picture of the future incorporation of aristocracy, *Bürgertum*, and the working class: an ideal unified Germany where everyone gives and receives the fruits of their labor.²⁵

Gustav Freytag’s politics were a product of both his geography and his time. He began writing during the *Junges Deutschland* movement and shared many of their

²³ Hohendahl. *Building a National Literature*. 113

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 84-85

ideals, but he first came to national and cultural prominence in the years following the failures of the 1848 revolution. The *Junges Deutschland* authors (primarily Karl Gutzkow, Heinrich Laube, and Theodor Mundt) held disdain for the reactionary policies of Metternich and the princes and kings of the German Confederation. They stood up for civil and democratic rights, social justice, and the overcoming of traditional religious and moral ideas. They also called for the separation of church and state and the “emancipation” through new rights for “women” and “Jews.”²⁶ They rejected the idealism of the classical and romantic periods, believing both literary directions to be too far removed from the reality of life. *Junges Deutschland* represented a precursor to realism, its authors decided that literature should not be elitist (like the classical and romantic movements) but should showcase the struggles of the common people. They followed Enlightenment ideals and became literary pioneers of the *bürgerlich*-liberal Revolutions of 1848/49. Because they often demanded a new, democratic order, and less censorship, the writings of *Junges Deutschland* were banned in the Frankfurt Bundestag in 1835. After this, *Junges Deutschland* advocated more radical ideals including an overthrow of the confederation, socialism, and the abolition of the clergy.²⁷ These positions alienated moderate liberals like Freytag and drove a rift into the liberal movement in the run-up to 1848.

In fact, Freytag was genuinely fearful of the impending revolution because of its suddenly radical nature. He compared it to a natural disaster: “We lived then like

²⁶ Georg Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature - 6. Young Germany*. Chapter XXI: “Young Germany and Menzel.” 1905. Project Gutenberg, 2015. Ebook.

²⁷ Diana Siclován “1848 and German Socialism,” Gareth Stedman Jones, and Douglas Moggach. *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought*. Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 2018. Print. 256-57

people who feel under their feet the pressures of an earthquake. Everything in the German situation seemed loose and unstable, and everyone declared that things could not remain as they were.”²⁸ Though his 1887 memoirs critiqued the social upheaval and radical nature of the revolution, his Vormärz writings portray him as a supporter of major social changes. He concerned himself with fighting for “bourgeois rights in the face of aristocratic dominance,” one would be hard-pressed to describe him as a radical revolutionary.²⁹ So, while he remained a member of a politically active group of historians and liberal publicists who helped the national cause during the revolution of 1848, Freytag’s involvement was limited due to his repugnance for what the *Junges Deutschland* movement had become.

Freytag also helped nationalizing the German *Volk* and the *Bürgertum*. In his novels, he presented the *Bürgertum* as united by a common set of values, which he then translated into national characteristics. To classify someone as a member of the *Volk*, they must have some ethnic tie to Germany. These classifications have led many to view his work as a sort of revisionist cultural history, crafting a myth of united German identity out of thin air using the unification of the *Volk*. In his study of Freytag, Benedict Schofield concluded that “Freytag's works ultimately conflated concepts of class and nation: the bourgeoisie develop into a nationalised folk, and national and middle-class identity become synonymous.”³⁰ He was also, however, equally concerned with uniting the *Volk* under a liberal constitution which would benefit all of them.

²⁸ Sheehan. *German History 1770-1866*. 657

²⁹ Benedict K. Schofield, *Private Lives and Collective Destinies: Class, Nation and the Folk in the Works of Gustav Freytag (1816-1895)* 2009. 94-95

³⁰ *Ibid* 237

Freytag's liberalism was also exclusionary, as he dipped into anti-Semitic and ethnonationalist themes in his novel *Soll und Haben*. These views were surprisingly common among liberals, however, as many believed that other cultures or societies were not ready for the liberal reforms they argued for. As many of these views were unsurprising given his life and context, Freytag should still be considered a moderate liberal: perhaps more conservative than his contemporaries mentioned elsewhere in this study. His primary complaint was with the aristocracy and those who wished to hinder German *bürgerlich* merchants. He also argued for freedom of the press and speech both theoretically in his works and explicitly in his periodical *Die Grenzboten*. He fought for an economically powerful and united Germany which would provide the new *Bürgertum* (to which he belonged) rights and opportunities to reach their true potential.

Politics and Prussia after 1848

After the failures of 1848, Freytag abandoned hope for a radical liberal revolution and instead sought to achieve most of the aims of such a revolution without the chaos and division he thought one would bring. Freytag's political goals, as articulated in *Die Grenzboten*, wanted to do away with the old aristocracy by advocating a "modern, secularized, post-corporate, self-regulating, enlightened civil society."³¹ However, as 1848 had proven, such an upheaval would be nearly impossible without the authority and strength of a large state. So even liberals like Freytag felt this

³¹ Larry L. Ping, "Gustav Freytag, the Reichsgründung, and the National Liberal Origins of the Sonderweg." *Central European History*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2012, doi:10.1017/S0008938912000623. 608

future “Reich” was impossible without help from Wilhelm I, Bismarck, and the enormous Prussian army.³²

James Sheehan attributes the failure of liberal intellectuals to compete in German politics after 1848 to a hatred of “parliamentary vanity” and party organization.³³ Freytag and many of his contemporaries fell into this characterization. Many gave up on reforms or retired from politics altogether, deciding to focus on their own acquisition of wealth: buying their privilege rather than fighting for their freedom. Freytag wrote often about the deplorable rise of what he called “the ugliest and certainly the most harmful kind of vanity in the world.”³⁴ Freytag saw the political solution to parliamentary vanity in a populist takeover. Though he might not have directly advocated it, Bismarck and his populist military takeover brought just what he had ordered: an upheaval of German bureaucracy and statehood not seen the conquests of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Still, Freytag advocated early and often for a *kleindeutsch* (small German) solution to the German problem. That is, he favored unification of only the northern German states with Prussia at the helm (as opposed to Austria either taking control or assuming a coequal status with Prussia as part of the *großdeutsch* or “greater German” solution). So, although Freytag advocated many of the same principles as the *Junges Deutschland* and other radical movements, his plan could not have been different. Growing up an ethnic German in Prussian-controlled Poland, he saw Prussia as key to

³² Ping. “Gustav Freytag... Sonderweg”. 610

³³ James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Print. 149

³⁴ *Ibid.* 151.

modernization and advancing capitalism. Like Anton, the hero of his bestseller *Soll und Haben*, Freytag believed that Germans should come together to celebrate their economic and industrial powerhouse: Prussia. Prussia would provide guidance on how to streamline and strengthen the other German states. By unifying Germany and promoting liberalism, capitalism might bring prosperity not only to the Junkers (Prussian aristocracy) and factory owners but to the *bürgerlich* ethnic Germans. It was a future that seemed ideal to many Germans, and along with Prussia's powerful military, it became one of the primary arguments for a *kleindeutsch* solution to the unification question.

Freytag's relationship with Prussia was complicated, and he both publicly and privately denounced the actions of Bismarck. Larry Ping, a scholar of Freytag, characterizes his private correspondence as viewing "Bismarck as a malicious political manipulatory who took advantage of his influence over the king to lay the foundations of a reactionary Caesarism."³⁵ Naturally, Freytag himself wasn't exempt from this reactionary censorship, and his published liberal beliefs got him into a precarious situation with the Prussian authorities in the leadup to the 1848 revolutions. In *Die Grenzboten* Freytag often wrote politically critical articles, including some on the suppression of the 1844 Silesian weavers' uprising, which resulted in Prussian authorities seeking to arrest him and censor his writings. He, therefore, asked his friend, Duke Ernst of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, for political asylum. While with the Duke, he published *Soll und Haben* in 1855, one of the most widely read German novels of the nineteenth century. It became increasingly influential in German political circles during

³⁵ Ping, "Gustav Freytag... Sonderweg". 606

and after German unification. He dedicated this work to Duke Ernst as his longtime friend and protector. Freytag's powerful connections to the nobility made his later works more successful. While the other authors of literary realism remained relatively unknown among the elite during their lives, Freytag was somewhat of a celebrity in Prussian circles. The following is an excerpt from that dedication, which seems to allude to the Duke's own involvement and influence in regard to Freytag's writing.

“What my noble duke then said about the conflicts of the last few years, the relaxed and utterly despondent temper of the nation, and the duty of authors, at such a time especially, to show the people, for their encouragement and elevation, as in a mirror, what they are capable of doing...”

“Nearly two years have passed since then. A terrible war is raging and Germans look with gloomy apprehension to the future of their fatherland... at such a time, in drawing an imaginative picture, not love but hatred too flows freely and readily from the pen—practical tendencies are apt to usurp the place of poetic fancy and instead of a genial tone and temper, the reader is apt to find an unpleasing mixture of blunt reality and artificial sentiment”³⁶

Freytag's relationship with the Duke contrasts the often-hostile treatment of aristocrats in his writing. He was known to rely on the Duke for protection and financial support. Also, with the powerful censorship in place in Prussia, he still needed the help of the Duke to help him receive the required *Impressum* and government license to publish his writing.³⁷

Freytag achieved popularity in a burgeoning period for German literature, and one when writers were transitioning away from court patronage to mass-market appeal. With the traditional court patronage system, a writer would need to find a member of

³⁶ Gustav Freytag, *Debit and Credit*, trans. L.C.C (New York: Howard Fertig, 1990). Dedication xxiii-xxiv

³⁷ Ping, *Gustav Freytag and the Prussian Gospel*. 157-58

the nobility to support their work. General popularity was therefore not as important in fiction as it would be in newspapers or periodicals. But as publishing companies and mass print media expanded books became more and more affordable. This period of literature can be understood as one of democratization and increased access. Larry Ping describes this as literary “Honoratiorenpolitik,” (politics of notables) a key aspect of growing societal capacity for involvement in liberal political affairs.³⁸

Liberal movements in Germany have a long tradition of “Honoratiorenpolitik” which emphasized the influence of town notables on enacting political change. James J. Sheehan describes this system as one “in which local notables cooperated through a loose set of personal and informal organizations.”³⁹ These organizations went about their business in relative secrecy, while German townspeople deferred to the bureaucratic rank of their leaders, assuming they had their best interests at heart. Freytag’s periodical and literature benefitted from this movement as people were inclined to buy his works because of his status within the community. A status which, as should be noted, was not entirely unearned. He had a long history of advocating for the rights of German citizens and criticizing the more unpopular actions of the Empire.⁴⁰

Freytag’s writing, therefore, appealed not just to the leaders of the Empire, but to the people who lived under it. This made him a decidedly liberal author. In *Soll und Haben*, he is writing to the German people. And yet in the above dedication, he still defends the need for his new book as if he is writing to a mentor and patron, rather than

³⁸ Ping. *Gustav Freytag and the Prussian Gospel*. 60

³⁹ Sheehan. *German Liberalism in the 19th Century*. 207

⁴⁰ Ping. *Gustav Freytag and the Prussian Gospel*. 86

speaking to the greater German people. This dedication letter is part of his transition from an author of the patronage or elite to a liberal author of the masses. When he addresses “the reader,” and their “gloomy apprehension to the future of their fatherland,” he is speaking not to the Duke but to Germans like himself who are fearful of their uncertain future under the Confederation. The Duke, like the rest of the gentry, does not depend directly on the factories and workshops for money to feed his family. Whether Freytag saw the Duke as open to liberal ideology or not, the dedication, like the book itself, reads as a message to all of Germany. Amid a war, Freytag writes his novel to remind Germans what he believes are their best qualities: industriousness, discipline, and honesty. He is reaching out to the *Bürgertum* and *Volk* in the hopes that they will unite to help themselves with little chance of the aristocracy stepping in.

Soll und Haben: Bürgertum, Bildung, and Labor

Freytag’s most famous novel, *Soll und Haben*, praises German merchant society and the efficacy of honest capitalist business practices. According to Benedict Schofield, it “embodied the literary political programme of programmatic realism developed in *Die Grenzboten*”⁴¹ Though some critics have likened its plot to Freytag’s pyramid: *Einleitung, Aufsteigen, Höhepunkt, Umkehr, und Katastrophe*,⁴² the novel generally eludes classification by this traditional form. What it does demonstrate is somewhat of an amalgamation of adventure story and *Bildungsroman* with Anton Wohlfart’s character developing over many stages before he becomes the hero. In this

⁴¹ Benedict K. Schofield *Private Lives and Collective Destinies: Class, Nation and the Folk in the Works of Gustav Freytag (1816-1895)* 114

⁴² *Ibid* 115

process, Anton goes from an idealist dreamer to a pragmatic *Bürgertum* businessman. While being a typical *Bildung* coming-of-age story arc, this transition mirrors Freytag and many of his contemporary authors' journeys from the romantic idealism of the *Vormärz* to literary realism.

Anton Wohlfart, the protagonist, is the son of an accountant. After the death of his parents, he becomes an apprentice in the office of the grocer Traugott Schröter in Breslau, whose company is obliged to help him because of a debt to his father. The Schröter family of merchants and the protagonist Anton Wohlfart represent Freytag's view of the ideal type of *bürgerlich* businessman. Due to his skill in copying business letters as well as his honesty, he wins the respect of his boss and the employees, so that his apprenticeship is shortened to two years and he gets a permanent job as a clerk. After initial friction, the inexperienced Anton makes friends with one of his colleagues, the worldly, arrogant, yet easy-going Fritz von Fink. He introduces him to the society of the landed gentry, a stark contrast from his *bürgerlich* office colleagues, and Anton is immediately captivated by their elegance and enjoyment of life.

While Frink introduces Anton to the world of high society, the Schröters teach Anton order, honesty, and other civic virtues. Schröter represents, as a surrogate for the author, the conviction "that free work alone makes one's life great, safe and lasting."⁴³ Schröter's workers, like Sturm his son Karl, and eventually Anton himself, put their futures in the hands of their benevolent boss. In the end, they receive rewards for both their loyalty and their hard work. The novel emphasizes the poetry and triumph of good work. The close-knit relationships of the workers and their *bürgerlich* merchant bosses

⁴³ Freytag, *Debit and Credit*, 176

help to bring out the best in all their labor. Furthermore, the industriousness commended by Schröter's business model elicits a feeling of national culture. This culture imparts a belief that any work done by Germans for Germans is beneficial to the rest of Germany.

Freytag often drew on his own experiences for his writing, a recurring theme in literary realism. Some historians believe that Freytag based the Schröters on a real role model from his life: Gustav Freytag was a close friend of the Breslau merchant Theodor Molinari (ironically an Italian émigré), whose family ran one of the most important companies in Breslau in the 18th and 19th centuries. He was a successful capitalist and represented the same sort of upward economic mobility story as Herr Schröter. Freytag also lived in an apartment above their storefront and the two carried on a correspondence after Freytag left Breslau.⁴⁴

The *Bürgertum* success stories of Anton and Herr Schröter contrast with the indecisive Baron von Rothsattel and his failing estate. Rothsattel is a member of the old nobility who tries to preserve his business and privileges in a rapidly changing society. Rothsattel borrows too much from the moneylender Ehrental and he lives well beyond his financial means to put up a front of superiority against the rising *Bürgertum*. When the end approaches, the Baron tries to kill himself, but Schröter and Anton decide to help him. Anton decides to help him after much convincing from his friend Bernhard, who happens to be the son of the moneylender Ehrental. Schröter agrees to help but primarily for his own reasons. On the topic of von Rothsattel, Schröter says "his

⁴⁴ Gustav Freytag, Izabela Surynt, and Marek Zybura. 2006. *Mein theurer Theodor: Gustav Freytags Briefe an Theodor Molinari 1847-1867*. Dresden: Neisse Verlag.

embarrassments arise from his having fallen into the hands of usurers, which proves him deficient in what alone ennoble the life of any man—good sense, and the power of steady exertion." Schröter believes that the decline of the aristocrats represents "no loss to the state" and considering his business, it might be beneficial. When Anton challenges him, he responds by extolling the moral dogma of cutthroat capitalism and social Darwinism:

"if such a man ruin himself in his endeavors, I should feel no malicious pleasure in his downfall, but I should say that he is rightly served, because he has sinned against a fundamental law of our social being; consequently, I should consider it doubly wrong to support this man, because I could but fear that I should thus be supporting an unsound condition of the body politic."⁴⁵

Schröter talks about Rothsattel as if his ill-advised business decisions are a plague on the German economy. Though he is a haughty aristocrat, Rothsattel is also a German, so any money he loses is a loss to the Germans and their future state, and thus a detriment to their "body politic." It is doubly regrettable for Schröter that the money is being lost to Slavs and Jewish moneylenders, who he doesn't consider part of his nation, and is his main reason for intervening.

Though Ehrental's tactics are not illegal, his own son, Bernhard, views them as morally reprehensible and exploitative. He is praying on failing aristocrats by making money off their losses: turning "this man's misfortunes to your own profit; you wish to seat yourself in his place... you drove to the baron's estate, and perhaps you were then planning how to turn his embarrassment to advantage."⁴⁶ Bernhard excuses his behavior by explaining: "ever since you left your grandfather's house, a poor barefooted Jew-boy,

⁴⁵ Gustav Freytag. *Debit and Credit*. 290-291

⁴⁶ *Ibid* 261

with one dollar in your pocket, you have thought of nothing but money-making. No one ever taught you anything else, and your creed excluded you from the society of those who better understood what gave value to life”⁴⁷ In the end, Bernhard decides to distance himself from his father’s business, secluded in his library, in an attempt to uncover something more to life than simply making money. He dies of a lung ailment before he can, but Anton carries on his vision and moral compass and pledges to help the Rothsattels despite their incompetence.

The story of Anton can be contrasted with his childhood friend Vietel Itzig, who also seeks the riches of the aristocrats. While he receives an apprenticeship with the Jewish moneylender Ehrenthal, he squanders it for his own personal gain. Bernhard describes him as “a villain” and man of “low nature,” saying that on the “first day that he entered our house, I felt a loathing of him as of an unclean beast.”⁴⁸ He goes behind his boss’s back, cheating his way into a great deal of money. He sells worthless bonds based on the property and businesses of bankrupt aristocrats and ends up almost putting the Schröters and Anton out of business. Fink criticizes Anton for trying to help the Rothsattels “Doing business for a fool who is not yet under the supervision of a man means making a fool of himself. [...] You have been such a fool”⁴⁹ Luckily for them, Anton remedies the situation by rescuing the property and getting Vietel arrested. With no one to turn to, Vietel tries to escape the law and accidentally drowns in the river. He makes money in the short term by disrupting other businesses and preying on the weak, but in doing so, finds himself alone and helpless by the end of the novel.

⁴⁷ *Debit and Credit* 277

⁴⁸ *Ibid* 260

⁴⁹ *Ibid* 493

Freytag pushed for a more established and cooperative *Bürgertum* culture, as can also be seen in his critique of the U.S. capitalist system through the character of Fritz von Fink. Fink seeks his fortune in the U.S. and later informs Anton in a letter that he was unhappy in his new life because of the tough competition and unscrupulous methods used in American capitalism. This lesson serves to remind Anton that there is more to life than making money and that financial success cannot be a substitute for morality. More generally, Anton and Vietel Itzig represent Freytag's two opposing views of Germany's future economy and society. When they meet at the beginning of the book, Vietel makes fun of Anton's going to the city to "learn business..." "to be taught how to twist up paper bags and sell treacle to old women" while Vietel is going "to make my fortune."⁵⁰ Vietel is a man who believes he can buy everything, even with his cheating ways. Anton not only wants to become rich in material wealth but wants to become rich in other ways: through connections with powerful individuals, a happy marriage, and a successful and fulfilling career improving his society. In the end, Anton is successful and Vietel drowns in the river fleeing the authorities. Freytag sees the new German *Bürgertum* going one of these two ways, and it is his national, liberal direction (that of Anton) which he believes will lead to a prosperous future for Germany and its people.

Exclusionary Liberalism: anti-Semitism and anti-Slavism

On two ventures to Poland, the new home of many German colonists and the estate of the Rothsattels, Anton and Schröter demonstrate the strengths of German

⁵⁰ *Debit and Credit*. 32

society. Freytag was a proponent of the kind of proto-colonialism which took place in West Prussia, where Polish and German settlements sat close but rarely touching.⁵¹

Post-revolutionary Poland had little political hierarchy or social order. Anton comments on the situation during his first trip to Poland:

Each individual existence became more insecure, isolated, and poor. On all sides were anxious faces and furrowed brows. The country was out of health; money, the vital blood of business, circulated slowly from one part of the great body to the other—the rich fearing to lose, the poor becoming unable to win. The future was overcast all at once, like the summer sky by a heavy storm.⁵²

In this first venture, Anton and Schröter try to rescue their business by working diligently to mend the situation with their *bürgerlich* business values in mind. After succeeding, the apprentice and master take this experience as a reinforcement of the value of their *bürgerlich* values and well-ordered business society in the face of foreign chaos. Anton is relieved at the end to go home, saying there is “no greater happiness than that of living quietly among one's own people.”⁵³

The second venture has a vastly different stimulus and tone. In the second venture, Anton and Fritz von Fink go to Poland as soldiers and protectors of German colonists. When the Poles revolt against the Prussian authorities, Anton is forced to fight for a German castle and some of Rothsattel's holdings, which Fink tries to purchase. There is evidence the following events were based on a revolution in Strelno West Prussia in 1848, from Freytag's past.⁵⁴ Anton articulates his refusal to back down when confronted by the Polish revolutionaries, describing it as part of “an ancient

⁵¹ Schofield *Private Lives and Collective Destinies*. 127

⁵² *Debit and Credit*. 167

⁵³ *Ibid* 256

⁵⁴ Schofield *Private Lives and Collective Destinies*. 127

struggle” “us against the Slavs, and we proudly sense: education, joy in work, and credit are on our side.”⁵⁵ This struggle is how many Prussian settlers characterized their work in Silesia, and it is dramatically different from his previous experience in Poland.

Whereas last time he believed that the Poles were simply lost and needed guidance on how to effectively run a society and economy, now he believes that colonialization by force means the best for both peoples.

Colonialism does initially seem to contradict liberalism, namely the principles of representation self-autonomy over one’s own land. Anton’s views on the Poles prove his advocacy for exclusionary liberalism. But one must remember that for Anton, that industriousness and capitalism are paramount to establishing a functioning liberal society. He believes the divergent cultures of the Slavic and Polish peoples represent an affront to the modernizing nature of capitalism. Therefore, they stand in the way of the rise of the *Bürgertum* and the advancement of society. If they are unable to accept this fact, these minority ethnic groups do not belong in a German state and should be excluded, or they will naturally interfere with German innovation. While this brand of liberalism expands to include all members of the “German” ethnicity, it simultaneously shrinks away from these perceived outsiders, affording them few rights using them only to further enrich the lives of ethnic Germans. Herein lies a distinction between the views expressed by characters in *Soll und Haben* and those of the *Junges Deutschland* movement. *Junges Deutschland* advocated for the emancipation of Jews and the raising of the political status of minority groups within the German states.

⁵⁵ *Debit and Credit*. 400

The primary Jewish characters in the novel range from actively criminal to enabling criminal behavior or ignorant. The Jewish broker Ehrental is a money lender striving for material wealth, whose preying loans to failing businesses made him notorious. Vietel Itzig (generally considered the antagonist) goes even further, breaking the law by buying worthless mortgage notes from creditors. Though he uses his position as an apprentice to Ehrental for his secret dealings, it is all done unbeknownst to Ehrental. With his experience, he is promoted to Ehrental's accountant, gains insight into his business, and uses this knowledge against the interests of his boss for his own illegal projects. Vietel buys the worthless notes waiting for the financial situation of the bankrupt creditor to improve, then he sues and makes a lot of money. While Ehrental is not responsible for these illegal transactions, his business is painted as inherently exploitative, so, his apprentices are indirectly encouraged to circumvent the law to exploit others. One may contrast this to Anton's *Bildung* where Schröter's goal is material wealth through mutually beneficial business dealings. Because of the depiction of Ehrental and Vietel (the primary Jewish characters) as parasitic businessmen, the novel has long been criticized as anti-Semitic.

As an ethnic Prussian living in Poland, Freytag developed deep anti-Polish and anti-Semitic sentiments. These come through in his writing in *Die Grenzboten* and *Soll und Haben*. Contemporary authors have called *Soll und Haben* a "liberal critique of the Jews."⁵⁶ In general, Freytag describes these partially assimilated Jews with hostility. Jewish wealth arrives "loudly" in Ehrental's smart dressing and gleaming diamond

⁵⁶ Ping, *Gustav Freytag and the Prussian Gospel*. 109

stickpin.⁵⁷ But through Anton and Schröter's commentary, he claims that despite their luxury, Ehrenthal and Vietel Itzig don't have the same cultural foundation as the traditional Prussian aristocracy or even the rising protestant *Bürgertum* class. Ping believes that Freytag's critique of Jewish merchants was secular. "He preferred that Jews accept the values of the chamber of commerce" rather than become baptized like many anti-Semites argued during the era.⁵⁸ So, this was part of greater assimilation and instruction into *bürgerlich* values, rather than a religious issue. As an example of this, Ehrenthal's son Bernhard, who is interested in literature, distances himself from his father's way of life.⁵⁹ With his conversations with Anton, and through his literary study, Bernhard decides that there is more to life than simply making money by any means. Bernhard is a stark example of literature used for cultural assimilation, a principle any of the literary realists would certainly favor. If Ping is correct, cultural assimilation solved the Jewish question (both within the novel and externally) for Freytag.

Which begs the question: what should they do with Jews who refuse to assimilate into German *Bürgertum* culture? Following the example of the Poles in *Soll und Haben*, exclusion or colonization seem the most likely answers. Perhaps Ping does not push hard enough against Freytag's anti-Semitism, calling it only an economic and cultural issue. Another perspective on Freytag's anti-Semitic sentiments can be found in Marcel Stoetzler and Christine Achinger's paper on "The Cultural Racism of Nationalist Liberals." They argue that during the process of modernization, German national

⁵⁷ Ibid 120

⁵⁸ Ibid 123

⁵⁹ Marcel Stoetzler, and Christine Achinger. "German Modernity, Barbarous Slavs and Profit-seeking Jews: The Cultural Racism of Nationalist Liberals." *Nations and Nationalism* 19, no. 4 (2013): 757

liberals viewed Jews and Easterners (especially Poles) as a hurdle for the movement. Similarly, they use Freytag's words in *Soll und Haben* not only to condemn him as an individual anti-Semite but as a representative of a larger issue within the liberal movement. "It suggests that the racism and anti-Semitism of nationalist liberals were intrinsically related to core aspects of the liberal world-view rather than being merely contingent opinions held by particular individuals."⁶⁰ This would imply that many of those who considered themselves liberal nationalists, using non-racial terms like "civic" and "political," were actually ethnic nationalists believing that Jews and Easterners should be excluded from future German liberal society.

Stoetzler and Achinger believe that rather than as a critique of German class structure, *Soll und Haben* should be read along internal-external lines (with the inside group being the German middle class, and the outside group being the nobility, Jews, and Poles). Anton reflects on his work with pride, saying "Each of us does his work in the German way... What has been won through the labour we have shared in is a joy for us as well, and fills us with pride."⁶¹ This is in stark contrast to the way Anton describes the Poles, who he sees as lazy when they aren't revolting, or the Jews whom he sees only working for personal profit.⁶² We see this in his self-proclaimed triumph over the Slavs "I stand here now as one of the conquerors who, in the behalf of free labor and civilization, have usurped the dominion of the country from a weaker race."⁶³

⁶⁰ Marcel Stoetzler. "German Modernity, Barbarous Slavs and Profit-seeking Jews", 739

⁶¹ *Debit and Credit*, 302

⁶² Marcel Stoetzler. "German Modernity, Barbarous Slavs and Profit-seeking Jews", 748

⁶³ *Debit and Credit*. 400

Soll und Haben lauds capitalism as an ethnic-nationalist German activity, where the fruits of German labor should be won for the German people. However, Stoetzler and Achinger are correct in their assessment of his form of exclusionary liberalism. Because liberalism and capitalism are so intertwined in his view of the future of Germany, those who receive the fruits of capitalism must be contributing a great deal to the economy. For this reason, *Soll und Haben* holds Prussians and ethnic-German *Bürgertum* in lofty regard and simultaneously relegates the “other” (Jews, Slavs, and foreigners) to a non-participatory role. The legal privileges and social benefits of liberalism should only apply to those who are enlightened enough (reasoned intellectuals) to use them and willing to sacrifice themselves for the German nation (ethnic Germans). To claim that Freytag supported a more universal form of liberalism would be an anachronistic mischaracterization of his political and literary writing.

Conclusion

Gustav Freytag represents a multidimensional figure in German liberalism and in poetic realism. He held strong views on the future of Germany. He saw great prospects in the merging of the northern German States under the rule of Prussia and the advent of a liberal-capitalist society. He also believed that such a society should be tailored to those who he believed would contribute the most to its constituents: the *bürgerlich* merchant class. These beliefs are reflected in his novel *Soll und Haben*. Anton Wohlfart succeeds in the face of great adversity, and his enterprise benefits himself and many of the other “German” characters. This can be contrasted with Vietel Itzig and Ehrenthal’s work, which though it provides individual wealth, undermines the success of the other characters. This lesson is articulated in Freytag’s dedication; when

“A terrible war is raging and Germans look with gloomy apprehension to the future of their fatherland” it is “the duty of authors, at such a time especially, to show the people, for their encouragement and elevation, as in a mirror, what they are capable of doing.” He hopes that his friend and confidant, the duke, will remain on the right side of history, working alongside the “German” people like Anton and not seeking personal gain at their expense like Vietel. More importantly, he hopes that Germans reading his book (it became one of the most widely read German novels of the 19th century) will recognize the lessons: work within the law and with each other to make a better future for yourself, your children, and your fatherland.

Theodor Storm: Humanitarian Liberalism from the German

Periphery

Theodor Storm, while sharing many of the same ideals about liberalism as the other German realist authors of the period, is not as often studied because of his unique geography. Born and raised in the town of Husum in the Schleswig-Holstein region of Denmark, he was always an outsider with respect to the national German movement. He always believed himself a German first and foremost, leaving his state when it was incorporated into Denmark in 1853. He lived first in Potsdam and then in Heiligenstadt, Thuringia, where he became a district judge of note. Schleswig-Holstein was incorporated into Prussia in 1864 after a war pitting Prussia and Austria against Denmark. Then, the region was divided among the Prussian and Austrian invaders and detached from Denmark. He advocated early and often for a *kleindeutsch* solution to the German question of unification, trying to raise the people up, as in 1848, to seek their own democracy. But he felt that this solution began to seem impossible as Prussia took more and more control of the German Confederation and his own life.

Storm's literature consists primarily of novellas and some poetry. Although many of his attitudes and topics changed during his long career, he maintained passions for nature, romance, home life, and for his homeland. Storm's early writing can be seen as a product of the late romantics: Eduard Mörike, along with Gottfried Keller, Paul von Heyse, and the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev, with whom he exchanged letters for most of his life. Their influence can be especially seen in his early lyrical works and his poems. These works emphasize mood in sentimental situations like remembering childhood (*Immensee* 1849), falling in love while defending the land of Schleswig-

Holstein (*Ein Grünes Blatt* 1855), and wandering through a garden with a long-lost love (*Auf dem Stathof* 1859). Storm is unique because he was still writing lyrical romantic novellas even after German literature had largely drifted away from such writing.

Authors in the *Junges Deutschland* movement in particular saw this style as an irrelevant luxury as opposed to realistic prose mixed with evocative poems using highly political themes.

Immensee and the Tragedy of Passionless Success

Immensee sees an old man, Reinhard Werner, reminisce about his unfulfilled love for childhood friend Elisabeth. As a child, he knew he wanted to spend the rest of his life with Elisabeth. The Swiss children go on adventures and grow up together next to the lake called Immensee. He writes fairytales and poems and recites them to her, though she is 5 years younger than him. When Reinhard turns seventeen, he enrolls in a nearby university but promises to continue sending poems and fairytales to Elisabeth who must stay behind (as she is only 12). Their difference in age is significant, both as a marker of Storm's old-fashioned romantic "love conquers all" attitude, and to mirror the woman it may have taken inspiration from: Dorothea Jensen. When he becomes distracted at school by other girls, Elisabeth reproaches him and begins to drift away. He returns on Easter to find that his school friend Erich has inherited his father's farm at the Immensee in Switzerland. Also, Erich is now courting Elisabeth, and he sends her little birds like Reinhard used to.⁶⁴ Reinhard makes Elisabeth promise she will still wait two more years for him. But he doesn't live up to his word to write her and after two

⁶⁴ Theodor Storm and James Wright. *The Rider on the White Horse: And Selected Stories*. New York Review Books Classics. New York: New York Review Books, 2009. 41

years of silence, Reinhard's mother informs him of Erich and Elisabeth's engagement. He returns to Immensee to visit Erich and Elisabeth, he pours his soul out to Elisabeth on a walk along the lake, and she cries over their lost youth. He leaves the next morning never to return. Years later, old Reinhard remembers his lost love briefly before returning to his studies.

This novella, perhaps inspired by his failed affair with Dorothea Jensen (his longtime mistress and later wife), represents the most passionate years of Storm's life. Dorothea sang in Storm's choir in Husum in the 1840s when she was only a teenager. Storm began an affair with the girl soon after while he was married to Konstanze Esmarch. During the time that he wrote *Immensee*, he was forced to leave Husum and Dorothea to enter exile. The novella airs many idealized aspects of their relationship. Reinhard's passion for Elisabeth is tragic because although he continues to return to her, he is never able to muster the courage to ask her to come with him. He puts off their relationship, which he foolishly sees as predetermined until it is too late, and she has moved on. In the end, he has all the education and success he hoped for, but he is still barred from the one thing he has longed for his whole life. This is an interesting dichotomy, because, unlike many works of literary realism, Storm's novella doesn't advocate for pragmatic industriousness. While the other authors depict the dangers of passion, Storm illustrates the dangers of passionless work. The old Reinhard returns to reality at the end of the story, "Then he pushed his chair up to the table, opened a book, and buried himself in those studies to which he had once given all the best powers of his

young manhood.”⁶⁵ Reinhard proves that despite financial success, a life void of passion is lacking. He wrote in a letter to his friend Hartmuth Brinkmann:

“In my young marriage there was one thing missing, passion; my hands and Konstanze's hands had stayed in one another out of a quiet feeling of sympathy... But with that child [Dorothea] who, I believe, was born with a passion for me, there was that intoxicating atmosphere that I couldn't resist.”⁶⁶

His disturbing love for the young girl and disrespect of his wife work against many of his strong female characters, such as the wife of Hauke Haien in *Der Schimmelreiter*. This is the first example of Storm's reality not living up to his ideals. After he left Husum, Storm reminisced on his own life, both in writing and correspondence, cursing how this ideal egotistical world where he could have both his wife and mistress (both respectability and passion) was impossible for him.

The book also hints at class struggle and poverty juxtaposed at the idyllic Swiss Alps. Influences of economic depression can be seen in Reinhard's interactions with beggars. First, as he reconsiders his decision to go to university away from Elisabeth, he gives part of his cake (a gift from Elisabeth) to a beggar woman. Then, years later, the pair run into one of Reinhard's past love interests: a musician from his days at university. She is now ragged with “disturbed beautiful features”, and she pours out her purse into Elisabeth's hands.⁶⁷ Elisabeth is shocked at the sudden confrontation with poverty, having lived most of her life in an idyllic world on the Immensee estate. Though the two lovers live in a fairytale world of wondrous estates and parties (the

⁶⁵ Theodor Storm and James Wright. *The Rider on the White Horse: And Selected Stories*. New York Review Books Classics. New York: New York Review Books, 2009. 49

⁶⁶ “Theodor Storm an Hartmuth und Laura Brinkmann” Husum, 21.4.1866. In: Theodor Storm – Hartmuth und Laura Brinkmann. Briefwechsel. Hrsg. von August Stahl. Berlin 1986, S. 146. Translated.

⁶⁷ Storm and Wright. *The Rider on the White Horse and Selected Stories* 47

Swiss paradise), there is a constant threat of abject poverty should they stray from their life trajectories. Reinhard wants to live with Elisabeth, but he must go to university and study something he has little passion for, or he won't be able to survive. He ends up losing his love to this reality. Meanwhile, Erich inherits his father's estate and takes Elisabeth, purely for her aesthetic beauty. He lights up his "massive meerschaum" pipe and watches the many workers tend to his vineyards.⁶⁸ He describes these events of good fortune as having "drawn the prize number in the lottery", success in both love and business.⁶⁹ Though Elisabeth agreed to marry Erich, Reinhard still believes his relationship should take precedent. The two had been promised to each other, in an early relationship that Erich believes was founded on passion rather than her now, more practical, needs.

This contrast between the practical realities and the fairytale idealism of young love is central to the novel. The contrast also echoes Storm's belief that the power and privilege of the aristocracy should be abolished, which he argued during the revolution. Those who inherit land in the novella are privileged not only in wealth but in life. Eric's inheritance is more than just the land; he also inherits the social influence to woo Elisabeth into marriage. Erich's inheritance and Elisabeth's practical needs kill the fairytale future dreamed up by the decidedly *bürgerlich* Reinhard. This is portrayed in the poems Reinhard reads to Elizabeth when they meet for the last time:

"It was my mother's desire that I should marry another: all that my whole heart longed for once is now what my whole heart ought to forget; it doesn't want to forget ... All pride and joy is gone and anguish fills my mind. Would that I could forget my pain. Could wander the world again

⁶⁸ Storm and Wright. *The Rider on the White Horse and Selected Stories*. 41

⁶⁹ *Ibid* 40

and leave my cares behind!”... “tomorrow oh tomorrow I will die alone.”⁷⁰

By this time, Storm had become slowly estranged from his wife Konstanze, and in a new and unfamiliar place, he was feeling increasingly alone. In his correspondence with her, he became obsessed with the thought of her remarrying after his death, and any hint of coldness in the bedroom became a crisis.⁷¹ With his home life struggling, he took to writing more passionately and more often, sometimes reaching out to periodicals like *Die Gartenlaube* and *Illustrierte Zeitung* for commissioned work.⁷² He still refrained entirely from publicly airing his political views.

The Schleswig-Holstein Revolution and Exile

Storm’s political involvement peaked around the 1848-49 revolutions. He continued to write during this period, but his writing reflected his political ideas more overtly than before or after the revolutions. During the Schleswig-Holstein revolution, Storm contributed to the new state’s constitution. He felt his democratic ideals, primarily that of a freely elected and sovereign parliament were not entirely met.⁷³ Even with such compromises, the constitution was rejected by Denmark, and Storm and others unsuccessfully petitioned their government. An appeal for help from Prussia was also met with silence, and the minuscule Schleswig-Holstein army was doomed.

He opposed the incorporation of his home into the ministerial Danish or Prussian governments. So, when caught between the two in the 1850s, he argued for independence. Still, he saw the republican movement in Schleswig-Holstein as a

⁷⁰ Ibid 44, 47

⁷¹ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 119

⁷² Ibid 128

⁷³ Ibid 132

doomed struggle. For about 15 years, from the first Schleswig-Holstein revolution until the Prussian annexation, he believed in independence, even when the vast majority of his countrymen were pro-German nationalists. As well as writing several pro-independence poems (which were not published due to censorship laws), he wrote the novella *Ein Grünes Blatt* (A Green Leaf) during this time.⁷⁴ It is the story of a conscript defending his homeland. He falls in love with a woman, but his fairytale future is ruined when their house becomes enemy territory. Like Reinhard in *Immensee*, he fights desperately to win back his idyllic world but is overcome by stronger forces. When he finally makes it to her cabin, he is confused that their world seems untouched by the war. But soon, the rumble of approaching cannons pulls him out of the dream, and he is returned to the harsh reality that his fairytale love will be no more. In 1851, the uprising was crushed, and Storm's legal position was terminated for his part in the revolution.⁷⁵ He left for Germany seeking work after seeing the death of his dream for an independent republic of Schleswig-Holstein. In Germany, he would continue his political and social aspirations through covert means.

Storm had a unique perspective on the middle class. Though he saw the aristocracy's privileges as inherently unfair, he still refused to see the rising *Bürgertum* as the only savior of German moral and economic principles.⁷⁶ Believing firmly that they lacked cohesive cultural identity or even shared opinions on democratic ideals, he saw their eventual replacement of the aristocratic masters bringing little change in the lives of other Germans. Erich from *Immensee* is a perfect example of this dynamic. He

⁷⁴ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 61

⁷⁵ *Ibid* 79

⁷⁶ *Ibid* 89

inherits his father's estate and quickly reverts to the life of a lazy aristocrat despite his bürgerlich origins. He believed instead that the people themselves should inherit the aristocracy's role, not just the most successful and cutthroat of the rising *bürgerlich* merchant class. He was a humanitarian and a proponent of representative democracy, but he held fears of the *Bürgertum* populism emanating from Prussia. He was also largely critical of Gustav Freytag, and his Prussian Gospel *Soll und Haben*.⁷⁷

David A. Jackson uses *Auf dem Staatshof* a work from 1858 to provide Storm's contrarian opinion on the *Bürgertum* dynamic. A fictional narrator Marx describes the last surviving member of a once-proud aristocratic family, much like the Rothsattels in *Soll und Haben*. However, this is where the similarities end, as the anti-aristocratic prejudice and moral industriousness extolled by Marx does not lead to an ideal humane society as it does in *Soll und Haben*.⁷⁸ In the end, Marx's striving for aesthetic beauty and "culture" mirrors that of the aristocrats he means to insult, and he fails to understand his hypocrisy. Thus, because the *Bürgertum* lacks a unified cultural identity, they will simply become a new de facto aristocracy, but instead through greedy business practices which tend to exploit the lower classes even more. As a humanitarian, he also abhorred Freytag's anti-Semitism and anti-Slavic tone. Storm opposed the opinion that progress should force certain people out of society, believing instead that the educated class should articulate the needs of the *Volk*.⁷⁹ It should be noted that he never saw these lower-class needs as possibly being hostile to middle-class interests. He never argued for a redistribution of wealth or questioned the idea of private property, and he believed

⁷⁷ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 85

⁷⁸ *Ibid* 87

⁷⁹ *Ibid* 86

they would not either. So, a violent peasant revolution, like the one triumphantly crushed by Anton in Freytag's *Soll und Haben*, was out of the question. He was still a conventional liberal, who kept the *Volk* away from direct political power, but this did not make him ignore the plights of the poor or minority groups.

After the failed revolution, like many of his fellow liberals, Storm advocated *Bildung*: the principle of self-improvement through philosophy, hard work, and education. He saw the *Volk* as the inheritors of the new German state. Therefore, he used most of his power and wealth earned as a lawyer to encourage education, cultural studies, and participation in politics for all people regardless of class. He opened a mixed choral society both in Husum and again in Heiligenstadt (Thuringia) to break down class distinctions regarding music.⁸⁰ Even while working within the Prussian judiciary, he made attempts at social engineering and improving the lives of others. Unfortunately, a wider gap began to appear between Storm's lifestyle and his ideals, as the Prussian judiciary paid less than his practice in Husum and he was spending more on his social engineering projects.⁸¹ His growing family, with education and dowries, made him rely too much on his father's funds, and he was soon forced to stop many of his projects to consolidate his spending. This was the second example of Storm's real-life not living up to his ideals.

While his career and political life suffered, his personal life also became tragic around this time. He lost his first wife in 1865. He chose to then marry his mistress, Dorothea Jensen. He was now with a passionate lover, as his letters reveal. He wrote

⁸⁰ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 94

⁸¹ *Ibid* 96

several poems around this time which were deemed too sexually taboo by the censors.⁸² Though he was revitalized, he kept alive Konstanze's memory by forbidding his seven children from calling Dorothea their mother. Also, he often languished in sorrow for his lost lover, writing in an 1865 poem "Tiefe Schatten" (Deep Shadows): "Then I ask: what is happiness? But I can't give an answer; Other than that you would come back to me, To live with me as you once did."⁸³ His wife's death and the years in voluntary exile had taken their toll. His intestinal problems linked to anxiety worsened, and he began to fear senility and death as he aged.⁸⁴ Simultaneously, his published writing became more pessimistic and determinist. It is evident, when looking at his later writings, that in his old age, he lost hope for his own happiness and a democratic humanitarian Germany for his daughter.

As his career ran on, he began to explore more realistic topics as he drifted away from Romanticism towards literary realism. Storm searched for situations that could appeal to a wider audience, a *Volk*, that could relate to situations or motifs in his novellas. Rather than entertaining his readers, he tried to explore the search for universal human needs through an understanding of *Gemüt* (a combination of one's heart, mind, temperament, and mood) which he believed was common to all people.⁸⁵ A focus on *Gemüt* gave him the confidence to write to the lower classes, as he began to do in his later works, while he remained financially and socially distant from them. These shifts can be traced along with his steadily declining hope for a democratic and

⁸² Ibid 120

⁸³ Theodor Storm: *Tiefe Schatten*. Storm: Tiefe Schatten (Gedichte) (Universität Mainz), accessed May 7, 2021, <https://www.staff.uni-mainz.de/pommeren/Gedichte/Storm/schatten.htm>.

⁸⁴ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 182

⁸⁵ Ibid 47

humanitarian national German state as the political frustrations of 1849, 1863, and finally, 1871 began to take their toll. His novellas take on a darker turn, with their isolated protagonists' struggling against their dark and tragic destinies. Despite his dashed hopes, however, he maintained somewhat of a romantic outlook manifested through his descriptions of nature and love. This dichotomy, which makes Storm's later writing a paradigm of poetic realism, was explored in his iconic 1888 novella *Der Schimmelreiter* (The Rider on the White Horse).

***Der Schimmelreiter*: Reflections on Life and Liberal Failures**

The novella *Der Schimmelreiter* was Theodor Storm's last published work, published in 1888, the year of his death. It can be seen as a culmination of his prose writing and is considered by many critics and historians to be his best. The story opens with an unnamed protagonist staying the night in a small northern Frisian town during a storm sometime in the 1830s. The novella quickly transitions to a story about the life story of Hauke Haien from the mid-1700s, recounted by the town's schoolmaster. The schoolmaster himself is an interesting character. A well-educated and rational theologian, he reflects on the past, though he was not alive to see it himself. Yet it is obvious that the schoolmaster has tinged the story with his modern issues of the Metternich era on the eve of revolution. So, when the schoolmaster criticizes the old dike master, Hauke's father-in-law, or the villagers in the story, he also criticizes the behavior of the modern townspeople.

To Frisian towns on the northern coast, dikes were a key defense against the destruction of the sea. Systematic diking began as early as the eleventh century, but disastrous flooding continued to wreak havoc on the coastal villages for centuries.

Progress, both intellectual and industrial, was routinely halted by the violent will of the sea. David Blackbourne describes, in his history *The Conquest of Nature*, how farmers and engineers stopped, and eventually reversed, encroachment by the sea in the Jade Bay (near Jever in Eastern Friesland). The North Sea was an unrelenting powerful foe, and the war against it was fought with dikes that provided a material necessity with moral urgency. He also describes ritual sacrifices of children and animals on new dikes, which made appearances by way of the superstitious townspeople in *Der Schimmelreiter*. Also, floods were viewed often as God's retribution by moral judgment on villages who had become too "wealthy or careless" in the face of the sea.⁸⁶ It seems that with the constant threat of impending doom, such villages were unable to achieve enlightenment through the liberal ideals that Storm advocated. The novella represents this dynamic extremely well, demonstrating the hierarchy of needs for Hauke's town: first the build the dike, protect the town, then develop civilization. When Hauke's dike comes crashing down at the end of the novella, it takes with it all the good he had done for his town, returning them both literally and philosophically to the dark ages.

The schoolmaster also frames the story in Christian terms, emphasizing Hauke's sins and how his misfortune was divine punishment for his hubris. And yet, while doing this, he pitches Hauke's life as a tragic *Bildungsroman*. Hauke, who started from nothing, manages to become the dikemaster through nothing but hard work, education, and confidence. He obtains this, the most prestigious and important town role, all while remaining an admirable humanitarian hero except for a few mishaps. When tragedy strikes later and the town is destroyed, and Hauke with it, by a massive flood. The

⁸⁶ Blackbourn, *Conquest of Nature* 127-129

schoolmaster believes that Hauke should be viewed as a hero, but public opinion of the town disagrees, cursing his name for the destruction he brought upon the town.

The novella's protagonist, Hauke Haien, is the epitome of a Theodor Storm hero: the son of a surveyor and poor farmer, a dreamer who is intelligent, but tragically unappreciated and cursed by his station and actions. David A. Jackson describes this as Storm writing "history against the official grain," focusing on those people who are all but forgotten in official histories and traditional literature.⁸⁷ Storm wants to bring the heroics of history into the homes of everyday Germans. He believes, correctly, that using characters from relatable and humble origins will draw his readers' attention. Despite the heroic rise of the protagonist, the novella is grounded in realism; both the hierarchical town social structure and character archetypes seem all too real for a North Sea German town in the period. The town is not ruled by a traditional aristocracy, but instead by the semi-hereditary role of dikemaster. The dikemaster holds the greatest responsibility as he keeps the waters of the North Sea from destroying the town. However, this means he also lives in relative luxury, working little for most of the year and benefitting from taxation of the town's industries. This dynamic is unique to these seaside towns, and it is a primary theme in Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*.

At the opening of the story, protagonist Hauke Haien is poor, but he has a lot of intelligence and drive. He watches his father, a landless surveyor, and helps him measure and calculate pieces of land. He learns with the help of a Dutch Grammar book how to read Dutch so he can read his father's Dutch edition of Euclid's *The Elements*. Through his study, he becomes an expert at both arithmetic and geometry. While his

⁸⁷ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 203

father mocks him for it, teaching himself Dutch also seems to help Hauke develop a passion for learning in general. His father tries to keep him busy working, assuming their social station will prevent Hauke from achieving anything with his mind, but he always manages to get his work done and still have the energy to think. His father “could see all too clearly that no amount of labor on the dike could prevent the boy from laboring with his mind.”⁸⁸ He seems to be fascinated by the sea and the dikes, often sitting alone on the dike late at night. While working mindless jobs as instructed by his father, he devises ways to improve the dikes.

As Hauke meets successes in his professional and personal life, we often see him cursed by his actions whether they are excusable or not. He is first cursed when he kills a cat after it attacks him. The cat is owned by an old widow who has lost her son to the sea. As Hauke walks away from its mangled body, she screams “Dead!... You’ll be cursed! You killed him...”⁸⁹ These curses foreshadow Hauke’s unhappy ending, despite all the good he will do the village. Hauke is a tragically flawed hero. And despite the schoolmaster’s interpretation, his fate is not his fault, because his actions don’t seem to have linear consequences. Instead, he is cursed three times by the townspeople, first for defending himself against a feral cat, second for buying a white mare from a vagrant, and third for refusing to sacrifice a dog when building a new dike. These superstitions add an element of the supernatural to the realism of the novella, further exemplifying the theme of man vs. nature. Additionally, they allow the schoolmaster to impart his own critique of the superstitious beliefs of the townspeople. And yet, they exhibit a

⁸⁸ Storm. *Rider on the White Horse*. 191

⁸⁹ *Ibid* 195

common motif of Storm's, that there is a notion of morality and human dignity which often runs contrary to public opinion and sometimes to the apparent will of God.⁹⁰ This is Storm's primary motivation for universal education, as can be seen in the later action in the novel when the ignorance and superstition of Hauke Haien's town ultimately lead to his downfall. Simultaneously, it precipitates Hauke's tragedy. At only a few points in the novel can the reader fault Hauke, and yet his actions lead to the town's destruction.

The next part of the story can be likened to Anton's apprenticeship in Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*. Apprenticeship and mentorship were the primary methods of upward mobility in most of German society, a place where skilled individuals from all backgrounds could manage to climb social ranks much faster. Anton, in *Soll und Haben*, learns lessons in both morals and business simultaneously under the watchful eye of Herr Schröter. In *Der Schimmelreiter*, when the local dikemaster Tede Volkerts dismisses one of his servants, Hauke applies for the position and is accepted. But even here he helps the dikemaster more with arithmetic and planning than in the stables, which the dikemaster appreciates, as he himself is not too good with numbers. The dikemaster inherited his station from two other generations, and as Hauke wryly points out it is in the "third generation that brains fail."⁹¹ The dikemaster, therefore, symbolizes wealth and status with his great estate and lavish eating habits, but not the intellect or hard work characterized by the *Bürgertum* in Freytag's *Soll und Haben*. Though Hauke's closeness to him is beneficial to his social standing, he learns very little from him and does most of his work for him, a stark contrast to Anton and Herr

⁹⁰ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 248

⁹¹ Storm. *Rider on the White Horse*. 201

Schröter's relationship. In fact, the dikemasters are portrayed as more like the aristocracy of *Soll und Haben*: they are grandfathered in through land holdings, and it is their skilled workers and assistants who ensure they perform their duties. In the same vein, poor management of the dikes can lead to resentment by the common people. Those who start both novels with land are portrayed as weak-minded, part of a failing bloodline. It is the ingenuity and industriousness exhibited by the rising *Bürgertum* like Hauke and Anton that saves and replaces the failing system with something dynamic and lasting.

Additionally, Hauke's closeness to the dikemaster makes him unpopular with Ole Peters, the foreman. Since Hauke also arouses the interest of Elke, the daughter of the dikemaster (and love interest for Ole Peters), the conflict between Hauke and Ole intensifies. The rivalry between Ole and Hauke leads in part to Hauke's downfall, as Ole stubbornly opposes Hauke's wishes at every opportunity, simply out of jealousy. The schoolmaster comments on this conflict, as it is obvious such rivalries still exist in his time. He believes that the petty bickering of the town has held up great advances and helped to sustain a failing economic and intellectual system of stagnation.⁹² This may hint at a larger critique of people's failures to work together through their own personal disagreements. Few members of the town can see the bigger picture: the constant danger of the water and the value in putting the town out of danger permanently.

At the North Frisian Winter Festival, Hauke wins the Boßeln (ball throwing game) and thus experiences his first social recognition. Then he decides to buy Elke a ring and to propose to her at a relative's wedding. But Elke refuses for the time being

⁹² Storm. *Rider on the White Horse*. 283

because she wants to wait until after her father's retirement. Elke's plan is to have Hauke, who now runs the office unofficially, apply as her father's successor, then marry her and inherit the estate and the job. This is interesting because Hauke seems to be entirely love-stricken while Elke is planning for the future. Storm's female characters are often adept at thinking ahead and better at navigating social hierarchies than their male counterparts. Elke understands that Hauke would be the best dikemaster for the town, but more importantly, she understands that there is no way he will be able to get the job with his insignificant land-holdings. Hauke, meanwhile, is both too inexperienced in high circles and too busy worrying about the dike to develop a scheme. He assumes that everyone will see his skills and knowledge and give him the job purely based on his ability. Additionally, the fact that Hauke does not hatch such a scheme proves that he is morally deserving of the position and of Elke. He wants both of them separately, contrasting Ole Peters, who marries a wealthy woman only to get her father's property.

Soon after their wedding, both Hauke's and Elke's fathers die. Hauke inherits his father's house and land. His father has saved up a lot for Hauke's future, but his land is so small that it seems insignificant compared to the more well-to-do members of the town. When it comes to reassigning the position of dikemaster, the conflict between Hauke and Ole returns. Traditionally, only those who own enough land can become dikemaster. Hauke does not, which is why the chief dikemaster recommends that one of the older dike representatives be promoted. But Elke interrupts, saying that she is already engaged to Hauke and through marriage, Hauke will get her father's land as well. The chief dikemaster agrees, and Hauke becomes dikemaster for the village. Ole

feels once again stabbed in the back, after recently coming into an abundance of land through his new wife and being the foreman for the dikemaster long before Hauke.

Hauke adopts a noble-looking white horse that, sick and depraved, he bought and nursed from a mysterious wanderer. The white mare, the villagers decide, must be a revived horse skeleton from the abandoned Hallig Jeverssand, which disappeared recently, reclaimed by the sea. As Hauke rides his horse around, the villagers are unsettled, calling it the spawn of Satan.⁹³ Hauke receives this second curse for his greed and lack of fear for superstition.

Hauke implements his new dike shape (which he devised from studying Euclid as a child). Some people oppose it, but Hauke prevails with the approval of the chief dikemaster. The villagers are distrustful of Hauke for his *nouveau riche* lifestyle and the curses which follow him. Next to the old dike, he has a new one built, creating more arable land for the farmers. When the workers want to bury a dog, as it is an old custom to build something “living” into the dike, Hauke saves it, and so the villagers curse him a third time. The fact that Hauke already owns large tracks of land in the new area protected by the dike, and therefore benefits greatly from the construction of the dike, is also met with discontent.

Hauke observes his dike by riding down it every day on his white horse. The new dike can withstand the storms, but the old dike, which continues to run to the right and left of the new farmland and faces the strongest waves of the sea, is getting old and dug through by rodents. After the grumblings of Ole Peters and the discontented workers, Hauke does not carry out any extensive construction work on the old dike,

⁹³ Storm. *Rider on the White Horse*. 236

only permitting some mild patchwork. He is too infatuated with his new dike to worry much about the old one. His focus on the new dike is admirable, but it locates a shortcoming of the new *Bürgertum*: he may be cleverer than his predecessor, but in the business of maintaining dikes, the most important skill is consistency, not ingenuity.

Years later, when the storm of the century threatens the old dike with collapse, a few workers try to break through the new dike constructed by Hauke under Ole Peters' orders. They hoped that the water would enter the new, mostly uninhabited, farmland and thus the old dike will be saved. Hauke confronts the workers shortly before this and prevents it. A few moments later the old dike finally breaks. Tragically, Elke and their daughter Wienke went in the direction of the dike that night out of fear for Hauke. He stands atop the dike, watching as they are buried by the water and mud from the breach. In his desperation, he throws himself and his horse into the raging waters crying: "Here, God, take me; but let the others alone!"⁹⁴

Der Schimmelreiter is the story of one man's existential and tragic battle against his surroundings. Whether it is the other townspeople, the sea, or God himself, Hauke's successes are constantly undermined by his surroundings. Public opinion of the townspeople sees him as a cursed devilish figure. Still, he is a tragic hero in the eyes of the schoolmaster who admires Hauke for his dynamic effect on the town and the hope in his promise to revitalize it. The schoolteacher ends his story, saying "the Hauke Haien dike is still standing" but the prophesied day when "the men then living would offer their gratitude to the builder of the dike..." "hasn't arrived."⁹⁵ The schoolmaster

⁹⁴ Storm. *Rider on the White Horse*. 282

⁹⁵ *Ibid* 283

attributes this to a failure of education. The townspeople are too caught up in their false hopes and myths that they cannot see the larger picture. Thus, the men who can truly help them go unheard.

The tragic poetry of *Der Schimmelreiter* is reminiscent of the failed revolution in political culture following the events of 1848. Even Hauke, the hero, fails to achieve his primary goal: to protect his family and the village. While Freytag's *Soll und Haben* ends in hope and the triumph of the *Bürgertum* merchants, this novella from 30 years later leaves the reader feeling uneasy about the future. All of Hauke's work was for naught, and on top of that, his name has been cursed for decades. Jackson believes this work is Storm's way of demonstrating how the *Volk* had failed to respond to the "aspirations of the popular soul." With politics overcome by a split between socialists and conservatives, as much of Europe was in the late 19th century, the common *Volk* aspirations began to dissipate. Storm saw this split as damaging to the German national identity, and though *Der Schimmelreiter* appears oversimplified, it does a good job of disclosing Storm's Manichean theory of history.⁹⁶ There was no better way to depict a never-ending struggle between good and evil than in the good of Hauke and the infiltrating evil of outside forces: the jealous townspeople and the sea.

Perhaps Storm, writing this novella in his final years, and after the unification, was looking back on his life and wishing he could have done differently. Hauke was trying to make the dike better and ended up destroying the town. With approaching modernity, nature's reality triumphs over idealism in a world of chaos. Like the water of the North Sea storms, the chaotic middle of the 19th century overwhelmed the plans and

⁹⁶ Jackson. *Theodor Storm*. 202-03

hopes of many liberals. At the same time, *Der Nachsommer* is an analogy for the progressive and liberal movements of the latter half of the 19th century.

By the 1860s, the progressive movement had begun, which aimed to use technological advancements and progress to bring about a near utopic future. However, not all Germans agreed, and soon the liberals and progressives alike found themselves faced with a war on two fronts: “against a nature that constrained humanity, and the ‘backward looking humans who did the same’”.⁹⁷ The sea works against progress, invading human society every year, and their danger must be overcome with technology and labor before the coastal towns can modernize. Simultaneously, the people themselves are “backward” in their superstitious beliefs and failed rationality, but they cannot be blamed, for their situation predestines them to fear the sea and the wrath of God above all else. After the Prussian annexation, the small Schleswig-Holstein towns of Storm’s youth held none of the same protection from the sweeping changes of the outside world. His earlier works lauded passion and nature, but both of those have led to tragedy in this novella. Storm’s writing and life concluded, tragically and pessimistically, in *Der Schimmelreiter*.

⁹⁷ Blackbourn. *Conquest of Nature*. 175

Adalbert Stifter: The Tragedy of Life and the Triumphant Conquest of Nature

Adalbert (originally named Albert) Stifter was born the eldest of five to a linen weaver named Johann Stifter in Oberplan, Bohemia, near the Austrian border in what is now the Czech Republic. His father died when he was twelve, forcing him to quit school and work in the fields for his family. But when his grandmother noticed his intellect, she enrolled him in a Benedictine Gymnasium in Kremsmünster, in Austria. He graduated and attended the University of Vienna to study law. He fell in love with a well-to-do Viennese woman named Fanny Greipl, but her parents (seeing his rather scarce financial prospects) forbade the two from exploring the relationship further. Though he married Amalia Mohaupt, their marriage was not happy, and he never truly got over Greipl, who died in childbirth a few years later.

One of the reasons Greipl's family disapproved of her relationship with Stifter was his indecisiveness about his future. He could never really decide if he wanted to pursue law and become an affluent member of Viennese society or if he wanted to pursue the arts and live like a bohemian. As it turned out, Stifter was not interested in pursuing law or public office and was far more interested in teaching. He began as a tutor for Viennese aristocrats and soon branched out in attempts at journalism and pedagogy. He believed wholeheartedly in the ideal of *Bildung*: through education, anyone could achieve success and personal growth. As he matured, he became less interested in revolution and more captivated by the beauty of nature and the benefits of ordered family life. Though he distanced himself from other revolutionaries after 1848,

he never gave up on his liberal ideals, which can be seen in his early writing up to his death.

***Brigitta* and the Revolutionary Ideal**

Throughout his literary career, Stifter explored themes of *Bildung*, love, and personal growth through a connection with and the conquest of nature. These can be seen especially in his early novellas, which present such themes openly, though occasionally underdeveloped. His self-stated goal was to “glimpse the gentle law that guides the human race”⁹⁸ Also, in these early works, Stifter’s growing political ties to revolutionary Austrian movements began to appear. On the eve of revolution, Stifter was equal parts hopeful and guarded, a mood which may be reflected in his novel *Brigitta* (1847). At around age 40, Stifter was finally coming into his own in terms of his literary style. *Brigitta* also came before the disappointment of 1848, so it serves as a perfect comparison for his later work: *Der Nachsommer* (1857), which will be addressed later. In *Brigitta*, the story of a man and his relationship with a woman shows the importance of inspiration in finding one’s calling. The character Brigitta simultaneously symbolizes the liberal ideal of taming nature and shaping it to benefit human society. *Brigitta* foreshadows Stifter’s later works and proves that Stifter’s depiction of the relationship between nature and liberalism remained unchanged even after 1848 and his retreat from political liberalism.

Stifter finished the novella *Brigitta* in 1844, but it was then heavily edited and rereleased (as a part of a larger work *Die Mappe, Zwei Schwestern*) a year before the

⁹⁸ Adalbert Stifter, *Motley Stones*, trans. Isabel Fargo Cole (New York City: New York Review Books, 2021). Foreward.

1848 Revolutions. The book follows an unnamed narrator who reconnects with his old friend Major Stephan Murai. Through the narrator's observations and the Major's life story, the reader sees the Major's search for fulfilling work and his love for Brigitta, the woman who reveals his calling. The Major asks the narrator to visit him in Hungary. While on his way, the narrator meets a mounted man whom he mistakes for the Major himself. It is instead a woman, Brigitta, who leads him to the Major's house. The Major is beloved by the many workers in his greenhouse. This comes as a surprise to the narrator. After an unhappy life, failed business ventures, and years of aimless wandering, the Major has found a job in which he (and others) can appreciate his potential. The Major praises Brigitta for her own work in transforming the Hungarian landscape and inspiring him to find a similar calling.

Brigitta encourages the reader not to agonize over lost love, but to practice good work and emphasize structured family life over passion. The Major and Brigitta cultivate a lifelong "bliss of Creating."⁹⁹ With Brigitta's direction, he cultivates the land, builds greenhouses, plants vines and crops, builds roads, and drains the swamp. In other words, they tame the wild for the benefit of civilization. After his secret return, he also cultivates a renewed relationship with Brigitta. This culminates in saving his (and Brigitta's) son from a wolf pack. His inspiration comes from the energetic Brigitta whose new ideas transformed the once barren plain into a bountiful and functioning town. In civilizing the often-savage wilderness, she builds up her own business along with others in the nearby towns. She then inspires the Major to do the same. Brigitta

⁹⁹ Margaret Gump. *Adalbert Stifter*. Twayne's World Authors Series. Austria; TWAS 274. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974. 53

appears always at home while on her estate; when giving orders and working with her hands she is “at the heart of her creation”¹⁰⁰ Brigitta is thus not only a desirable wife for the Major, but she is also the reason to continue his struggle. After her inspiration, he devotes his life to working on cultivation and taming nature arguing “that we must begin thus with the earth of our country”¹⁰¹ Without her, the narrator postulates, he is a directionless wanderer. His money is useless so long as he has no meaningful way to spend it. But once he meets Brigitta, and understands her project, he seems revitalized. The narrator remarks on this inspiring reinvention:

How beautiful and firmly rooted is the destiny of the man who works on the land – provided he understands and ennobles it. In that simplicity and variety, in that primary commerce with nature, which is without passion, such a destiny approaches most nearly the story of paradise.¹⁰²

Brigitta’s development into an extraordinarily gifted and inspirational woman is attributed to her isolation from her family and her lack of physical beauty. Her parents planned to marry off one of her two beautiful sisters to the well-to-do landowner Stephan Murai (who would later call himself Major), but he instead fell in love with Brigitta. They marry and Brigitta bears a son, but soon Stephan falls in love with a young woman named Gabriele. In his short-lived passionate relationship with the beautiful Gabriele, he feels he has fallen into “an abyss of freedom,” and he is “exuberant” at this “frenzy of indescribable delight.”¹⁰³ Brigitta confronts him for his

¹⁰⁰ Martin and Erika Swales. *Adalbert Stifter: A Critical Study*. Anglica Germanica. Series 2. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. 98-99

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid 103

unfaithfulness, and he flees, renouncing his own wife and son. Brigitta moves with her son to the town where the novella is set and where she is first encountered by the narrator. Stephan decides to secretly follow her under a new title: Major. He watches over his wife secretly until she becomes seriously ill. Then he reveals himself to her and cares for her until she recovers. She is reluctant to forgive him or tell her son the truth about his father. Eventually, the two reconcile after the Major saves their son from a wolf pack. The narrator describes Brigitta's forgiving of Stephan: "and so lovely is forgiveness, the finest thing of which poor wayward man is capable on earth, that her features shone as with an incomparable beauty."¹⁰⁴ The sentimental end to the novella, a scene of the three reuniting, has been called by Catriona MacLeod a portrait of the "de-eroticized bourgeois family."¹⁰⁵ Brigitta's amazon qualities combined with her matriarchal running of the estate place her in limbo between nature and domestication. The ending then depicts her giving up much of her wild qualities to invite the Major back into her family. This family is an affirmation of German *Bürgertum* culture, and it represents the repression of desires as much as a return to patriarchal familial structure. And yet, Brigitta's gender ambiguity does not disappear. Androgyny works throughout the novel to discipline the notion of purely passionate or aesthetically inspired love.

While German critics at the time praised *Brigitta's* "apolitical nature," we might read it today as an allegory for the rising liberal revolutionary movement.¹⁰⁶ Brigitta rebuilds the dilapidated countryside into something productive for all its inhabitants.

¹⁰⁴ Swales and Swales. *Adalbert Stifter*. 104

¹⁰⁵ Erik J. Grell. "Homoerotic Travel, Classical Bildung, and Liberal Allegory in Adalbert Stifter's "Brigitta" (1844–47)." *The German Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (2015) 528

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* 515

The Major is attracted to her in the same way young liberals like Stifter might be attracted to the idea of revolution: upending the status quo for a fresh start. But even this early in his career, Stifter expresses his reservations against an all-encompassing revolt. In his dissertation on “Liberal Affect and Literary Culture,” Erik J. Grell identifies the stark ending’s ability to expose “the dangers of excessive passion” and to “discipline the revolutionary sentiments of his liberal readers.”¹⁰⁷ The Major almost loses his wife and son forever in his lust for young Gabriele. Also, he only gets his family back through years of steady and careful attention. Stifter often said that his ideal revolution would focus more on compromise and managing realistic reform politics than the radical reformers.¹⁰⁸ He hoped to work in dialogue with the Viennese aristocracy (using connections built up from years of tutoring them) and even some of the current politicians rather than completely upending the status quo. As is often the case in practice, however, level heads and compromise did not prevail in 1848-49 and Stifter began to regret his involvement.

Stifter had his reservations about the liberal movement, which came to a head in 1848, but he believed that any work he did pushing his society in the direction of civilized humanitarian democracy was a step in the right direction. This humanitarianism extended to all Austrian citizens, even those aristocrats he tutored, and he felt no ill will against them for their wealth. Later, when he worked as a teacher and eventually a school administrator, he believed everyone deserving of an education, both

¹⁰⁷ Grell *Stifter's Brigitta*. 516

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*

practical and philosophical. These liberal and humanitarian ideals would follow him throughout his life; even in his darkest days, he would write hopefully about the future.

Stifter volunteered to represent Vienna as a candidate for the Frankfurt Parliament in the revolution of 1848. Though he allowed his name to go forward as a candidate, he became increasingly disillusioned by the revolution. Like Freytag, he feared the ability of mass political movements to sweep great change in a short time. As he described years later, the chaos and violence utilized by revolutionary agitators led to a prevailing “rottenness in the public affairs of the world.”¹⁰⁹ Though he was a liberal idealist, his support of the movement waned as the revolution dragged on and began to incorporate more and more of nationalist German identity. Furthermore, he despised how those who were elected by the parliament began to consolidate their power if left to their own devices. In letters, he expressed his despair at the revolutionaries:

“many people who craved freedom are now themselves prey to despotic desires... whoever had earlier to suffer under the arrogance of others becomes, once he is free, not righteous but arrogant in his turn.”¹¹⁰

His disillusionment with the revolution was so extreme that when the Emperor decreed a constitution, which gave little power to the elected parliament, Stifter nonetheless defended it. He viewed the constitution both as a step in the right direction (providing the first constitution for the whole of the Habsburg Empire, a proclamation of fundamental rights, and a basis for renewed economic prospects) and as the victory of reason over passion.¹¹¹ It should be noted that this constitution ignored the revolutionary constitutions, and it offered no legal protections to Slavs or

¹⁰⁹ Swales and Swales. *Adalbert Stifter*. 13

¹¹⁰ *Ibid* 8-9

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

Hungarians.¹¹² Austrian Interior Minister Baron Alexander von Bach, who succeeded Prince Schwarzenberg after his death, began his reactionary campaign in 1852. He centralized administrative power in Austria and slowly began to implement neo-absolutist policies such as censorship programs and the resumption of public trials.¹¹³ Stifter decided to leave for Linz around this time, where he would live out a retirement from politics. Stifter returned to teaching permanently and refused to write further political treatises in the worsening climate of censorship. He still wrote fiction. And, occasionally he painted, further exploring his passion for aesthetic beauty.

Political Retirement, Depression, and *Der Nachsommer*

In Linz, Stifter was finally appointed to a managerial position in the education system. He enjoyed inspecting and improving the schools in northern Austria, but soon his home life began to interfere again. Amalia was unable to have children, which contributed to the tension, but it was the couple's only adopted child (and Amalia's niece) Julianne who would drive a wedge between them. While Stifter was gone for days or weeks at a time, Amalia was unreasonably harsh on Julianne and frequently beat her. This caused Julianne to run away at a young age, once getting a job as a maid in an inn to escape from her aunt. Being a prominent family with an only child on the run wreaked havoc on Stifter's work and social life. When Amalia's body was found in the Danube in 1859, Stifter felt partially responsible.¹¹⁴ Stifter's grief and guilt would

¹¹² Olmütz, "Austrian Constitution of 4 March 1849," trans. Dag Trygslund Hoelseth, Austrian Constitution of 4 March 1849 (Hoelseth, March 2, 2010),.

¹¹³ Blackbourn. *The Long Nineteenth Century*. 230

¹¹⁴ Swales and Swales. *Adalbert Stifter*. 3

follow him to his grave, and his health began to decline as his drinking and eating habits spiraled out of control. He died nine years later of suicide while suffering from cirrhosis.

While worrying about Amalia's wellbeing, Stifter was still writing profusely. Stifter's most famous work *Der Nachsommer* (English translation: *Indian Summer*) was completed in 1857. The novel is more polished and more tempered by experience, both literary and political, than his early works. One can compare *Der Nachsommer* to his earlier works in two divergent ways: one is the depressing failure of a life marred by tragedy, and the other is the rejuvenation and rebirth of love and passion after years of disappointment. The former tracks well with the Stifter's depression at a time when he was socially, emotionally, and politically drained. The latter theme mirrors the thoughts and hopes of an aging Stifter for a life that could have been. The book might then read as a sort of revised autobiography, with a much happier ending.

The book follows a man named Heinrich Drendorf through his childhood and maturation. He comes from a highly regimented household, where his father worked his way up the social ladder to owning a commercial business. A true pragmatist, the father plans out Heinrich's education and leaves little space for exploration of art and nature. Heinrich begins to expand his theoretical knowledge through reading a great deal about agriculture, craftsmanship, and industrial methods. He also goes on hikes and researches plants, animals, and geology. *Der Nachsommer* alludes to several themes present throughout Stifter's literary career. First, through detailed descriptions of art and *Biedermeier* furniture, Stifter offers both a praise and critique of urban *bürgerlich* liberalism. Secondly, it follows the narrative of a non-traditional *Bildungsroman* that

offers key insights into Stifter's views on family structure. Finally, it focuses on nature more than any of Stifter's previous works, both in structure and setting, to give several lessons about the importance of nature in liberal and intellectual pursuits.

While sheltering from a storm, the protagonist Heinrich meets Baron Gustav Freiherr von Risach, the welcoming owner of an estate called *Rosenhof* (rose farm). This owner, collector, gardener, and scientist becomes his mentor and role model and imparts his views of the world. He also imparts on the reader a great deal more about politics than the main character. Heinrich falls in love with Natalie, the daughter of Risach's love interest, Mathilde. Risach acts as Heinrich's father figure, though he is distinctly different from Heinrich's real-life, highly regimented father. After seven years of traveling with Risach, he decides he is ready to settle down with Natalie. Risach is embarrassed by his tumultuous relationship with Mathilde, a spot on his otherwise stable and wise lifestyle, which ends in his fleeing the town and trying to end his own life. Risach, while mourning his lost love enters civil service, achieves fame and fortune, and marries a wealthy woman, but quickly becomes dissatisfied with his new life. It holds none of the pleasure and connection with nature of his life at the *Rosenhof*. He also finds himself lost in the abstract world of bureaucracy, wanting to return to "the essence of things" and "pure art."¹¹⁵ Risach returns to acquire the estate and Mathilde and they reconcile after the deaths of their partners. Mathilde gives Risach (who has remained childless) a child to raise and their long-buried love resurfaces. Though they don't get married, they live out their remaining lives in a surreal "Nachsommer" of retirement. Modeling Risach's wishes, if not his actions, Heinrich and Natalie do marry.

¹¹⁵Adalbert Stifter and Wendell W. Frye. *Indian Summer*. New York: P. Lang, 1985. 399-402

Then Heinrich reunites with his family whom he had abandoned in his search for a calling, fulfilling Risach's dream of a happy and fundamentally ordered life. The education and cultivation of their children become their primary tasks.

Biedermeier

Der Nachsommer represents an intersection between *Biedermeier* style, humanism, and *Bildung*, three of Stifter's most prominent influences. *Biedermeier* was both a literary and furniture style. As furniture, it adapted Napoleon's Roman styles with their simple elegance and expensive imported materials to be more affordable. Instead of rich imported mahogany, cheaper local wood was dyed to imitate its color. The style was much desired in Vienna and soon spread to other German-speaking regions, remaining until 1848 one of the few unifying pieces of German bourgeois society. *Biedermeier* literature originated in historical fiction and depictions of non-political subjects, as they were less often censored during this era. It also began to be associated with the rising *Bürgertum*, which had become more common in Vienna after the 1849 constitution. Viennese merchants were some of the first to break into the upper classes through mercantile and wanted a style which could be both refined and practical.

In *Der Nachsommer*, the influences of *Biedermeier* can be seen in the society wherein the protagonist, Heinrich Drendorf, finds himself. His father moves from a farm to a single floor in a townhome to a larger house just outside the city. Their family's upward mobility mirrors a lifelong maturation that comes through education and cultural cultivation. This is the *Bürgertum* dream. If all goes well, individuals in society should always be moving upwards: towards more money, more education, and a better moral understanding. As they achieve these goals, they will be more likely to

seek out pleasant furniture and art. While the new *Bürgertum* is less attuned to detail than the old nobility, they still enjoy the antiquated style and good craftsmanship, albeit in a slightly more restrained fashion.

Both of Heinrich's father figures valued splendid art and furniture and anything reminiscent of antiquity. His own father, despite working long hours in his modern drudgery, admired well-crafted furniture and paintings. Heinrich describes "elegant luster and fine inlaid work" on his father's cabinets along with paintings everywhere and articles of furniture "carved with wondrous figures and shapes" with a diverse mixture of wood types. He also points out a chest with a coin collection and stones from the ancient Greeks who his father described as "the most artistic people of all time."¹¹⁶ For his father, intricate art and furniture was a rebellion against the *Bürgertum* establishment just as much as it was idolized by its patrons.

Heinrich also describes Risach's estate in meticulous detail, room by room, as if it were up for sale. In addition to the inlaid cabinets and typical Biedermeier furniture, Risach is wealthy enough to afford decorations like a white marble statue to match his marble staircase. The mix of colors used in the columns and steps gave the whole room, traditionally one of pure utility, the "impression of a lovely painting."¹¹⁷ Just like the rose wall outside his house and its beautiful grounds, Risach's interior is intended to combine the beauty of nature with the order of a utopian society. Biedermeier furniture builds on nature's perfection by using the majesty of natural colors in the styles of past civilizations which better understood their beauty. At the same time, its construction is

¹¹⁶ Stifter, *Indian Summer*. 11

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* 53

cheaper and more practical than more elaborate pieces which flaunt wealth like the aristocrats. For these reasons, Heinrich agrees it should be a staple of the *Bürgertum*.

Der Nachsommer somewhat postdates the *Biedermeier* period, but its lingering influence can be seen in the novel's emphasis on descriptions of beauty in nature and art. A young Heinrich is distraught to see a tree being chopped down for firewood; because it rotted, it "couldn't be made into a chair or a table or a cross-bar or a sawhorse."¹¹⁸ He also is both drawn to and appalled at the sight of a dead stag: "a noble fallen hero, a pure unsullied creature." He waits with the body until the hunters and their dogs arrive.¹¹⁹ Later, Heinrich gazes up at the starry night sky, after confessing his love for Nathalie. He decides at that moment, that the reason its magnificent stars can only be viewed at night when everyone is asleep, is so its "splendor wouldn't become mundane, so that the greatness wouldn't be diminished."¹²⁰ All these moments point to Heinrich's belief that nature surpasses civil society in beauty and order. *Biedermeier* shows the superior beauty of nature but simultaneously the ability of skilled craftsmen to mimic this beauty in an attempt to rival nature. In that sense, it is a combination of beauty and order, of the wild artistic freedom of nature and the controlled order of society. Heinrich is infatuated with the *Rosenhof* because of this combination of natural beauty and order: its meticulously decorated rose walls and marble statues complement its symbiotic relationship with the forest around it.

Another characteristic of *Biedermeier* comes through in the novel's emphasis on morality, righteousness, and humanism through the natural order. Success, as a gift

¹¹⁸ Stifter, *Indian Summer*. 20

¹¹⁹ *Ibid* 25

¹²⁰ *Ibid* 327

from God, can be either noble or immoral depending on the reasons for seeking it out. The novel establishes early on that the natural order of society is not determined by compulsion, but by the actions of the righteous. It is the righteous who create morality, not the government or the church. The symbolic commune at the *Rosenhof* represents these ideals. Individuals, rather than institutions, should determine what is right and wrong. For these individuals to know what is right and wrong, they must be educated but they also must go beyond that: they must be able to measure their actions in relation to their surroundings. Risach encourages them to upend societal norms if they do not comport with the natural order.

These discoveries might come as a surprise to someone familiar with *Biedermeier* and post-Metternichian literature more generally. While some authors interpret *Biedermeier* culture as comfortable yet conformist, Stifter's work seems to elevate the style. Additionally, while post-Metternichian values tend to follow the comfortable, easy route—encouraging one to make money and become successful rather than revolt against the ancient regime—Stifter paints Heinrich's escape to the *Rosenhof* as a rebellion in itself. We notice that one might rebel by retreating to nature and well-decorated interiors, while others see it as an admission of defeat. By returning to the art and culture of antiquity, von Risach has discovered a way to uproot the artificial order of modern society. Risach rebels against the conservative notion that making money for no higher motive is enough. Instead, he argues that self-cultivation in liberal and natural philosophy is just as important as the accrual of wealth.

Bildung

Upward mobility through *Bildung* is a prominent theme in *Der Nachsommer*, as in many German Realist novels. James Sheehan, discussing the effect of *Bildung* in literature, writes about *Der Nachsommer* as an “epitome of the *Bildungsroman*,” where the protagonist is taught “indirectly through observation” and living with his mentor Risach. He describes Heinrich’s *Bildung* as a non-traditional one. Heinrich’s learning is done gradually rather than as a result of confronting crises or dramatic events. Also, Risach does not provide much in the way of verbal instruction. Instead, Heinrich’s introduction to—and assimilation into—the *Rosenhof*’s social and moral order leads to his *Bildung*.¹²¹ The *Rosenhof* (and Risach himself) get their cultural prominence from their proximity to nature, and it is only through living a life close to nature that one can achieve this kind of cultural development.

Heinrich’s *Bildung* appears different because he is not learning a trade like Anton in Freytag’s *Soll und Haben* or Hauke in Storm’s *Der Schimmelreiter*. While Anton learns how to perform his business tasks, and Hauke learns how to manage the dikes, Heinrich is simply learning how to live an ordered and fulfilling life. His *Bildung* focuses instead on the cultivation of his own inner self, which is wholly independent of his job or social status. He can learn this from observation and imitation of Risach, whose life is idealized in the young man’s mind. When Risach takes Heinrich aside to tell him something specific, it is usually something Risach failed to accomplish. His

¹²¹ Sheehan. *German History 1770-1866*. 830

major lesson seems to be about the paramount importance of family structure to a well-ordered life. And in this case, the lesson succeeds where Risach failed.

One might see his *Bildung* as a retreat from society, a sort of aristocratic holiday, and thus a contradiction of the more traditional *bürgerlich Bildung* featuring hard work and ingenuity. If Heinrich had a more demanding job, he wouldn't be able to run away to the *Rosenhof*. Risach's position, however, disproves this point. Though he appears aristocratic with his estate, he is actually a *Bürger* in disguise. An orphan, he was forbidden from marrying his love Mathilde by her parents. Then through hard work, he became like Heinrich's father, an urban *bürgerlich* civil servant, even managing to inherit some wealth through a marriage of convenience. Now he has retreated from that life to become more in touch with nature and art. While this appears a return to the aristocratic way of life, it is actually a new form of nobility that admires reason and cultural growth above all else.

Supporting this reading, literary critic, Christine Oertel Sjögren, points out in her collection of essays *The Marble Statue as Idea*, the characters in *Der Nachsommer* belong to a new form of aristocracy: where hard work and education replace the titles of the old nobility. The ideal society can be characterized as one where "single-minded" devotion to a vocation leads to "purity" and eventually, success.¹²² But there is an equal emphasis on cultural growth through admiration of nature and art. Risach, in becoming Heinrich's mentor, imparts his values through working on his garden and nature. Complacency regarding work and art is equally detestable to Risach, who tries to

¹²² Christine Oertel Sjögren. *The Marble Statue as Idea*. University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures; No. 72. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972. 76

preserve the past because: “in the old works... there is the charm of the past that has withered away, which becomes stronger and stronger in people when they get into their older years.”¹²³ He sends his brother Roland to find old handmade crafts and art to restore and add to his collection. One must cultivate the beauty of the world around oneself; restoration is as important to the new aristocracy as industriousness. Where the old aristocracy inherited their wealth, making them lazy and unproductive, Risach and his *Bürgertum* make their money by improving themselves and their towns through symbiotic relationships with their surroundings.

And yet, Heinrich’s *Bildung* is decidedly more relaxing than those of other authors such as Storm and Freytag. Anton Wolfhart and Hauke Haien (from *Soll und Haben* and *Der Schimmelreiter* respectively) ignore art and nature, separating themselves from the finer things while working themselves almost masochistically into the grave. An admirer of those writers might describe Heinrich’s *Bildung* as too aristocratic and unproductive. But Stifter’s supporters, lifelong proponents of the healing and self-cultivating quality of nature, believe Heinrich is better prepared not only to work within the confines of his society but to have a long and happy family life knowing his philosophical place within the wider natural world. And, as Heinrich’s father said: “man was not on Earth for society but for himself” and the “best painter in the world would do humanity a great disservice if he wanted to become a barrister.”¹²⁴ Heinrich knows he must first find his natural calling before he can be of service to society, and he learns it through his experiences—however relaxing—on the *Rosenhof*.

¹²³ Stifter, *Indian Summer*. 101

¹²⁴ *Ibid* 15

Nature

The above reading of *Der Nachsommer* places paramount importance on the harmonious relationship of society and human development to nature. Sheehan uses this relationship to prove that reasoned thought (and not passion) is the ultimate goal of Heinrich's *Bildung*.¹²⁵ On the other hand, Risach's love of art and gardening place equal emphasis on creative pursuits. These sorts of pursuits seem completely futile when one has no measure of passion for them.

Another reading of Risach's relationship points out Risach's (and liberalism's) tendency to overpower nature with reason, stifling passion and suppressing emotion, to achieve domination over one's internal and external affairs. Like his early writing, Stifter's characters here long for a family life unclouded by emotion and tragedy in a world where men can shape nature to their benefit. In this reading, while *Der Nachsommer* purports to revolt against the civil world by seeking out nature, but the characters also try to organize nature into an ordered, civil manner where reason overpowers chaos. This would contradict Heinrich's earlier experiences including his reactions to the wastefulness of the lumber mill and the hunters who killed a deer.¹²⁶

Der Nachsommer is also more attentive to themes of death and solitude than we might traditionally associate with a *Bildungsroman*. Sjögren believes that the emphasis on solitude and death leads to a greater understanding for Heinrich and his relationship to the world. He is constantly made aware of his own impending death; just as the narrative pushes him towards maturity, it also pushes him towards death. Though nature

¹²⁵ Sheehan. *German History 1770-1866*. 830

¹²⁶ See note 45

is seen as a tool for Risach's utopia, it also contains malignant and powerful forces which threaten those on the *Rosenhof*. Though Sjögren believes this helps Heinrich live close to nature and maintain his humanity, the novel's emphasis on impending doom can be read as a warning. The wild animals exemplify the importance of conquering nature, but also the inherent danger of taking on such a project. The constant threat of annihilation, which comes from incessant battle with nature can only be overcome through reason and order. In order to conquer death, one must bring civilization to the far reaches of the wild. Risach demonstrates for Heinrich that one can live close to nature and gain insight into its function without losing civility.¹²⁷ At the same time, Risach teaches Heinrich to conquer nature with his hands and his reason.

Whether or not *Der Nachsommer* argues for nature or ordered civil society in a liberal utopia, it contains a close examination of humanitarian ideals. Wendell Frye, the translator of the novel wrote in the preface that it "presents an ideal world, in contrast to what Adalbert Stifter saw to be a degenerating period."¹²⁸ Stifter portrays a humanitarian utopia in the unnamed "city" while the real Vienna was politically dangerous and unstable as Stifter himself saw in 1848. He adds that "the reader finds one of the most complete statements of the 'Humanitätsideal' (ideal of humanity): the young geologist becomes totally immersed in traditional values and culture, thereby becoming a more complete and fulfilled human being."¹²⁹ The "Humanitätsideal" was a key aspect of *Bildung*, proving that each individual has the opportunity for self-

¹²⁷ Sjögren, *The Marble Statue as an Idea*. 19

¹²⁸ Stifter and Frye, *Indian Summer*. 5

¹²⁹ *Ibid*

improvement through the cultivation of morals and culture, in addition to more traditional forms of education.

The idea of *Der Nachsommer* is that the world, and therefore human society, revolves around the seasons. The post-summer mentioned in the German title refers to a time dictated by nature where the characters find themselves trapped during part of the novel: the time after Risach's failed love with Mathilde. The *Nachsommer* comes after the honeymoon summer of love when the two realize that their relationship is more complicated than it appears. This theme collides with Stifter's emphasis on nature over man, and that all of man's creations cannot interfere with God's, or they may be destroyed. Risach's residence is built on this presumption. Heinrich, too, learns to order his life around an individual work ethic and its relationship to the world of nature. By isolating himself from the common affairs of society and instead grounding himself in the natural order of the world, he can find his calling. He can then use this positive isolation (from the distractions of bustling society in the city) to become more in tune with his love for the woman Nathalie.

Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter* also explores the theme of nature's strength over human society, where Hauke's dike represents man's affront to nature. While he can achieve all his societal goals, he fails to conquer nature itself and is cursed by it. While Hauke fights against nature and superstition all his life, Heinrich learns early to work around it. Heinrich's life seems like a fantasy at times, though, as he seems to always get what he wants with little sacrifice. Perhaps that is why the ending of Stifter's book is much happier than Storm's or even Stifter's own life. It is an ideal, and not to be taken for fact or as a moral lesson. Perhaps in his later life, Stifter distanced his writing

from some aspects of realism, as the reality of his own life was too overpowering. With his life becoming too hard to bear he turned to literature as an escape, immersing himself in an ideal.

Conclusion

Stifter maintained a belief in bottom-up humanitarian liberalism until his death. Additionally, he believed many revolutionaries were more interested in uprooting the old system than implementing a sustainable and mutually beneficial new one. He never advocated revolution against God or nature, as he put it.¹³⁰ So with the failure of 1848, he retreated from the realm of politics. Though he failed to enact political change, Stifter was able to exhibit his form of bottom-up liberalism in his school inspector job in Linz. Like many practical proponents of *Bildung*, Stifter believed that he should use his position in Linz to improve the lives of those less fortunate. For Stifter, the fastest and most humanitarian national improvement came through utilizing education and opening opportunities for others to develop themselves rather than forcing change through violent revolution. Though Stifter's political aims were stymied in 1848, he got to work building up the education and economy of the Austrian *Bürgertum*. He saw reason as a precondition for the kind of far-reaching constitution he wished for passionately as a young man. While he never lived to see his form of liberal democracy succeed in his home country, he aspired to help many of his fellow Austrians to complete their own *Bildung* and find their callings like the characters in *Brigitta* and *Der Nachsommer*.

¹³⁰ Swales and Swales. *Adalbert Stifter*. 10

Therefore, while he remained unhappy and unsatisfied throughout his life, Stifter undoubtedly helped a great deal of his fellow Austrians to climb up the social and economic strata through education. This became his major contribution to society as his home life became increasingly more tragic and unfulfilled. The characters in *Der Nachsommer* achieve their *Bildung*, and they grow to be well-balanced and adjusted individuals. Stifter's characters emphasize living the good life with a happy family and finding lifelong satisfaction. So, while the novel appears realistic in its form, it represents an ideal for Stifter. The characters manage to balance work and love. Stifter's life is more convoluted and tragic than many, but nearly all his works conclude on a jovial note. Perhaps while writing *Der Nachsommer* Stifter was hoping for a more fulfilling and happy ending for himself than the one which he saw looming. Stifter remained a liberal to his death, as seen in his writings. But, just as his own mental and physical health deteriorated, so did the free expression of Austrians. During the Bach years, political absolutism and censorship reigned supreme, and minorities like Czechs and Hungarians were persecuted or excluded. Later, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 would make a *großdeutsch* solution impossible. Though Stifter's suicide in 1863 cannot alone represent the death of Austrian liberalism, it signifies the despair and existential threat to the aging 1848 liberals. But most importantly, it marks the departure of one of the most influential Austrian literary realists. Stifter was a tragic figure, but he managed nonetheless to provide hope for the people he reached in literature and in life.

Conclusion

The Post-Revolutionary period of German literature was characterized by a shift to realistic and liberal themes. This movement was known as German literary realism and has been the subject of this study. Moving away from romanticism, realism emphasized the experience of the everyday and attempted to convey that experience to the reader as a reflection in a mirror. The three authors examined through this investigation, though geographically and biographically diverse, shared a liberal connection through their mutual participation in the revolutions of 1848. They each experienced persecution from the reactionary regimes of the 1850s and 60s. In their years in political exile, they worked as lawyers, journalists, and teachers, but continued to write novels and novellas. Though their writing changed, the underlying realistic, poetic, and liberal themes remained. This investigation has proven the existence of a literary counterculture made up of these liberal themes by comparing their writing before and after 1848 along with their historical biographies. These authors, by modeling society through realistic fiction, managed to confront their readers with liberal themes such as *Bildung*, labor, and socio-economic distinctions alongside the progressive themes of conquering nature and approaching modernity. Through their literature, these authors created a political counterculture of liberalism and progress against the status quo of stagnant aristocracy and reactionary conservatism.

The authors explored in this study disagreed both on political ideals and the methods to best convey them because of their diverse backgrounds and geographic origins. The Austrian Stifter wrote about Bohemia, Freytag about his home in Prussian Silesia, and Storm about Schleswig-Holstein and the Frisian lowlands. Despite their

geographic differences and divergent political contexts, they shared themes that facilitate a bridging between the political and cultural forms of liberalism through nationalism. For liberalism to succeed at the political level (e.g. the Frankfurt parliament), there must be an established cultural form of liberalism: a striving towards more individual freedom, government accountability, and upward social mobility. These three authors' similarities across their geographic differences demonstrate the growth of national German identity and general liberal principles. And though their method was slower, the momentum of using nationalism to perpetuate liberalism provided a deeper revolution than the one of 1848, one which struck at the heart of German social structure and culture across all its diverse states. In their literature, the cultural form of liberalism found refuge from the politically reactionary regimes of the 1850s and 60s and managed to slowly undermine its principles and unify the political culture in German consciousness leading up to the unification of 1871.

Adalbert Stifter was an Austrian nationalist who welcomed the possible incorporation of the other German states if the solution provided a fair and humanitarian government for its citizens. After the revolutions, which he quickly became disenchanted with, worked as a teacher and school inspector in Linz. His personal life grew more difficult and tragic while his writing—an escape like his art—became more refined. His writing focused on the liberal themes of a balanced family structure, reason over passion, and conquering and connecting with nature. These themes originated in his pre-1848 writing in the novella *Brigitta* (1844), which articulated both the determination of the reasoned individual and the dangers of excessive passion. In the novella, an androgynous hero models for a struggling *bürgerlich* landowner how to

succeed and conquer nature for the benefit of his society. The novella also showed the family as the basis for success and progress. The themes he cared most about were consolidated along with his experiences culminating in his definitive last work *Der Nachsommer* (1857). *Der Nachsommer* painted a picture of escapist liberal ideals expressed through *Biedermeier* furniture, art, and nature. Rather than judging the many liberals who sought refuge instead of a continued struggle, it portrayed the later life of Stifter and his fellow liberals as one of self-reflection, human connection, and reconnecting with nature and one's artistic roots. Shortly after finishing the book, Stifter committed suicide, but his last work manifests the perceived failures in both his life and the liberal movement he took part in.

Theodor Storm's life can be traced in abstract terms along with his writing career so that each novella contains themes from a part of his life. Born and raised in Schleswig-Holstein, he began as a supporter for their independence, with many of his early novellas like *Grünes Blatt* exploring themes related to the war and takeover by Austrian and Prussian armies. He had a large list of romantic influences and a fascination with poetry. He also used funds from his legal profession to lead several programs to combat class-stratification including choral societies for people who might not have been considered otherwise. His political relationship with Prussia and the German states was complicated, and when he found himself exiled from his home, he chose to ally with the Prussian unification (*kleindeutsch* solution). His final novella, *Der Schimmelreiter*, was published in 1888, long after the period when the other authors were most active. The novella was included to prove that the themes of the literary realist liberal authors did not die out with the 1871 Unification, but rather lived on in

their minds until their deaths. Theodor Storm was not a proponent of Bismarck's Prussia, nor was he an optimist when looking towards the future. *Der Schimmelreiter's* ominous ending as well as the foreshadowing of the dikemaster's and townspeople's behavior alludes to the reasons for the dying movement of political liberalism. Their superstitions, mistrust of authority, and fear of the sea all work against the progress which aims to modernize the town. Though political liberalism would never be as strong as it was in 1848 until long after the literary realists, the cultural markers of liberalism remained, and *Der Schimmelreiter's* popularity and influence are testaments to that fact.

Gustav Freytag explored the poetry and power of work in his liberal *bürgerlich* novel *Soll und Haben* (1855). He also argued for his political beliefs including capitalism, the end of the aristocracy, and expanded rights for German citizens through his political periodical, *Die Grenzboten*. By combining the two sources along with his memoirs, one can come to a better understanding of how he contributed to the movement expanding the political culture of liberalism. He wrote in his memoirs about what he believed was a rash and chaotic revolution in 1848 along with his support for the Prussian unification. His novel *Soll und Haben* exalted its German characters' industriousness and ingenuity, naming them the inheritors of the fatherland and the chosen people to teach its successful ways across borders. It also used stereotypes to denigrate Jews and Poles, who are depicted as undeserving of the fruits of German labor. Freytag publicly advocated an exclusionary form of liberalism, one which was more widely accepted in the years preceding and following the Unification of 1871. His upbringing in Prussian Silesia contributed to his animosity towards Poles and Jews as

well as his steadfast support of the Prussian-backed *kleindeutsch* solution. In the years following the publication of his novel *Soll und Haben*, he was characterized as a visionary and a consolidator of the German national sentiment. And unlike the other two authors, he seemed to have few regrets on his death bed with the way the German nation had progressed.

One of the major issues of the liberal movement was the rising *Bürgertum* and the declining aristocracy, so a primary theme of this study has been an examination of the authors' depiction of this dynamic. Storm was wary of the *Bürgertum*, who he believed were culturally inferior to their ancestors because they seek only material wealth. Stifter wanted them to use a passion for nature, art, and *Biedermeier* furniture for self-cultivation and in pursuance of liberal ideals after their cultural consolidation. Freytag wanted to see the end of the aristocracy first, and then the new *Bürgertum* to unite as a class and become mutually successful (excluding the weak and those who don't belong).

These differing goals for the *Bürgertum* lead the three authors to have different views of liberal culture. While the authors do not explicitly divulge their political opinions, the reader can use the main characters' trajectory in the authors' *Bildung* tales for advice in their own lives. By showing their protagonists' success and happiness while they make important life decisions, the authors tell us those are the right decisions in that context. Simultaneously, when characters regret their decisions later, we would be right to assume that in that context the decision was incorrect. With each author's unique *Bildung*, comes a unique set of themes. Stifter's protagonists relied on nature, *Biedermeier* furniture, and family to reach their goals of self-cultivation. In Freytag's

case, shared labor, reason, and ethnonationalist industriousness led to *Bildung* and upwards socio-economic mobility. For Storm's protagonist, ingenuity, determination, and doing the right thing in the face of adversity were the key attributes to success. All three authors also utilized archetypal antagonists which worked against the protagonist and depreciate the outside culture. Freytag and Storm both used one character to denote the inept aristocracy standing in the way of progress and a more antagonistic character who tried to climb the social ladder in the wrong way (in contrast to the protagonist). Freytag used Rothsattel as the incompetent aristocrat and Vietel Itzig as the conniving malfeasant. Storm used the old dikemaster whose ineptitude was saved by the quick-thinking Hauke Haien, and Ole Peters who tried to stop Hauke out of jealousy. Stifter's protagonists were more complicated, with the attributes of hero and anti-hero appearing on characters like Major Stephan Murai and Baron von Risach. Murai eventually does the right thing by his family but is shown succumbing to passion and cowardice. Similarly Risach's estate and mentorship of the protagonist Heinrich are admirable, but his failed relationship with his lover casts doubts on the veracity of his other works.

The authors also had political backgrounds, which often came through in their actions and less frequently through their fiction writing. Stifter was almost chosen as a representative for the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848 before he recused himself. Freytag wrote politically charged articles in his periodical with Julian Schmidt *Die Grenzboten*. Storm, a prominent lawyer with political aspirations, was involved in the revolutions of 1848 and the ensuing political crises of his home Schleswig-Holstein. Storm wanted the poor to stay distanced from politics but maintained his humanitarian belief by valuing all lives above the needs of the few. This view he expressed through charity and in his

writing, which he hoped would reach all the people of the German-speaking world regardless of class. Freytag wanted to see every German citizen prosper through their own ingenuity and industriousness. While he advocated for expanded freedom of the press and of speech, he kept a Darwinian view of capitalist society: adapt or perish. Stifter was more interested in traditional family structure and building liberalism from the ground up. His aristocratic *Bildung* tales promote the importance of self-cultivation before seeking financial success. He fretted over the immoral or risky behavior of rebels who wished to tear down society without understanding the value of its pieces. The compromise of *Biedermeier* furniture comes from a desire to collect fine furniture at a lower cost. *Biedermeier* and nature represent the compromise between the old aristocracy and the new *Bürgertum*, one should get rid of the outdated laws and feudal system but keep some semblance of their important social and cultural heritage. Like Storm, Stifter believed there was value in history, and a revolution that did not recognize this fact would be inconsistent with the cultural norms of the society and thus doomed to fail.

All three authors advocated for bottom-up liberalism after the revolution of 1848: the kind of cultural revolution that starts with human interaction and makes its way into the cultural consciousness and finally penetrates the smoke-filled rooms of politics. Through literature, each author gave models of their own form of bottom-up liberalism later in life. Stifter provided an aristocratic retreat form of *Bildung*, where one leaves the bustle of the city to focus on their own self-cultivation in tune with nature. The characters in both *Brigitta* and *Der Nachsommer* have created a successful learning community around this principle which they see as a utopic and symbiotic

retreat. They use art, landscaping, and *Biedermeier* furniture to tame the wild while keeping its natural beauty. But because of the location, the effect on society is minimal. All these distractions serve only to make their protagonists better family men. Perhaps the basis for a liberal culture starts with the family unit, but the other authors' models suggest there is more to be done.

Freytag's model, as seen in *Soll und Haben*, grounded itself within the existing social and labor circles of the modern city. Here the characters are provided a model of how to be a good hard-working German citizen. However, once the characters become familiar with what liberalism should look like, they are forced into the "underdeveloped" colonies to teach new people their system. While they are spreading these liberal ideals to other populations, however, they cannot lose sight of their original intent: to nationalize their people. Thus, while they are expanding liberalism, they must also restrict others' access to it, keeping their identity as exceptional Germans above all.

Storm's model for this bottom-up liberalism prioritizes the effect of one notable individual who understands the needs of the many. With Hauke Haien, he shows us how one idealistic, yet persistent, individual can overcome both financial and social adversity to become a leader against the forces of both nature and close-minded townspeople. Because of Hauke Haien's tragic end, however, the reader is left with a hopeless feeling that no one person will be able to unite the German people without sacrificing their ideals or themselves.

Liberalism as an abstract cultural concept cannot be summarized within a few authors' writings and live stories. However, investigating these writings has led to several conclusions. Firstly, the same themes which liberal authors were fascinated and

motivated by in the Vormärz period persisted in their writing into the Nachmärz and beyond. Secondly, the authors of the literary realism movement used realism to paint pictures of and critique their societies. Thirdly, the authors of this period may not have agreed politically, but through their writing, they modeled different methods for readers to succeed, progress, and incorporate the building blocks of liberalism into their lives. Altogether, they contributed to a mutual piling of liberal ideals, realistic depictions, and literary greatness which inspired generations of Germans to come. The effect of such a movement through literature should not be measured in legal or political reform, but in the changing nature of German society and culture. Literary realism certainly played a role in the progression of German industry and modernization, as the country became a world leader in infrastructure and manufacturing. The predicted death of the aristocracy came true, although not entirely as quickly nor in the ways each author had hoped. Additionally, the growth and prosperity of the German *Bürgertum* in the latter half of the 19th century is unquestionable, and their educated families became these authors' largest supporters.

The movement of literary realism's influence on the liberal political movement is less apparent. Though the politics of Prussia and Germany nationalized warmongering and discrimination, these bestseller novels of hope continued to circulate in liberal circles into the 20th century. Prussian politics were unable or unwilling to incorporate the liberal ideals of these authors. In the same way that the 1848 revolutions failed the liberal people of Germany, these nationalist governments misrepresented these authors' goals. Nationalism first, and not liberalism first became the political model for the German early 20th century. Still, these works of literature by dissenting

authors provide insight into the development of the German nationalist and liberal movements.

Though the words of these authors were not heeded by politicians, their works are tools with which we study the divergent possible paths for the German state in the second half of the 19th century, and what could have been. Their words vindicate the German people and culture against the deterministic Sonderweg (special path) thesis. These authors represented a counterculture liberal movement, and their words influenced generations of Germans. Even in the darkest days of German political history, its people found solace in the hopeful words of these authors. Dietrich Bonhöffer read Stifter and Storm awaiting execution inside a Nazi prison:

“Stifter's...woodland scenes often make me long to be back again in the quiet glades of Friedrichsbrunn...he is wonderfully clear and simple, which gives me a great deal of pleasure.”¹³¹

“One of Storm's verses I came across the other day seems to express my mood, and keeps going through my head like a tune one cannot get rid of:

‘And though the world outside be mad,
Christian or unchristian,
Yet the world, the beautiful world
Is utterly indestructible.’”¹³²

The authors of literary realism provided consolation for liberal Germans who came after. Like the literary realists, these later liberals loved their country and its people but found themselves alienated by its political systems. For these Germans, like the millions who still live under authoritarian regimes across the globe, literature represents a refuge for ideas and a reminder of what matters. Furthermore, Bonhöffer

¹³¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Bethge, Eberhard, and Fuller, Reginald H. Prisoner for God: Letters and Papers from Prison. New York: Macmillan, 1954. 32

¹³² Ibid 53

and the thousands like him show that no matter the level of censorship, a regime will never be able to stop an individual's thoughts and their unique interpretation of art and literature. For as long as one can choose what to think, the ideals of liberalism may live on in the mind. The literary realists constitute only one example of using literature to establish and expand the political culture of liberalism. Still, the historical consequences for Germany and the world of the Prussian unification justify the study of such a movement. The search for causes to history's great events precipitates a more holistic study of a people's culture. By using literature, historians can more acutely depict the cultural and social trends of a population with increasing access to written works as it crawls beneath the oppressive eye of censorship.

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