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New German Review: A Journal of Germanic Studies

Title
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Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6225t5wf

Journal
New German Review: A Journal of Germanic Studies, 27(1)

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Publication Date
2016

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Intersecting at the Real:
Painting, Writing, and Human Community in Adalbert Stifter's N*achkommenschaften* (1864)

Bethany Bowen-Wefuan

In Adalbert Stifter's novella *Nachkommenschaften* (Descendants; 1864), the protagonist Friedrich Roderer struggles to represent the essence of natural landscapes—what he, as the narrator, calls the "wirkliche Wirklichkeit" (40) and what I refer to as the Real—in his roles as a landscape painter and writer. Through Friedrich, Stifter explores the very notion of realism. John Lyon describes the aims of realism thus: "Realism must […] convey an ideal, a sense of truth present in external reality, but not evident to the untrained eye […]. The realist perceives the ideal and lets it shine through" (16). For the realist Friedrich, the challenge of representing the "truth present in external reality" in both painting and writing lies in the complex relationship between his own subjective interpretation of physical reality and the aesthetic conventions that history and culture have handed him. Like a pendulum, he sways between embracing subjectivity and rejecting convention. Furthermore, while he initially searches for the Real in representation, he later pursues it in domestic life. In each extreme, the Real eludes him. It can neither be relegated to a particular convention nor to subjective interpretations of the physical world. The Real does not exist in representation, but it is not accessible in the real world, either. There is a brief moment in Stifter's text when subjectivity and convention, and representation and physical reality intersect harmoniously. I argue that the Real 'shines through' at this intersection.

Realism as Mirroring

The explicit awareness in Stifter's novella of the challenges of realist representation is not unique in this period of Realism known as German Poetic Realism. *Nachkommenschaften* participates in a widespread discourse within literary texts on realist representation, and specifically painting. Gottfried Keller, Theodor Storm, and Theodor Fontane also approached the nature of realist representation via literary depictions of visual art. In the quest to delineate an aesthetic that captures the Real, the notion of painting as a mirror of the visible world appears repeatedly. Theodor Storm's novella *Aquis submersus* (1876) offers an excellent example of this interest in mirroring. Here, the ideal function of art is to make the absent present; thus the artist is most successful when his painting mirrors its subject. This ideal is realized when the painter Johannes mistakes his own painting of his lover Katharina for the true Katharina.[1] For a brief moment, reality and reproduction are indistinguishable: "Katharina stand mir gegenüber… Ach, ich wußte es nur zu bald; was ich hier sahe, war nur ihr Bildnis, das ich selber einst gemalet" 'Katharina stood facing me… Ah, I knew all too soon; what I saw was only her portrait, which I

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myself had once painted' (371).[2] Johannes' painting fulfills the text's ideal of representation as a mirror of the unpainted world.

Elucidating this aesthetic of mirroring in Storm's novella, Robert C. Holub observes that, "for the sake of realism, the artist becomes a medium, a mediator between object and representation, world and sign. His own personality and wishes are reduced to nothing; he is taken up totally in faithful reproduction" (144). The artist's "personality and wishes"—his subjectivity—are obstacles in this conception of realism. Holub's statement perfectly captures the initial approach of the painter in *Nachkommenschaften*, namely: the precise copying of nature in art. Friedrich himself describes his determination to copy nature, when he states:

> Ich möchte mir am Ufer des vorderen Gosausees dem Dachsteine gegenüber ein Häuschen mit einer sehr großen Glaswand gegen den Dachstein bauen, und nicht eher mehr das Häuschen verlassen, bis es mir gelungen sei, den Dachstein so zu malen, dass man den gemalten und den wirklichen nicht mehr zu unterscheiden vermöge.
>
> 'I would like to build myself a little house on the bank of the outer Gosau lake with a glass wall facing the Dachstein. I would not leave the house until I had succeeded in painting the Dachstein so that one could not distinguish between the painting and the actual mountain'. (6)

Friedrich aims for the same doubling of the physical world that Storm's protagonist Johannes accomplished. Here, success is measured by the extent to which the artist can minimize the difference between his representation and its object.

When he sees Emilia's portrait, the Prince in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* (1772) exclaims, "wie aus dem Spiegel gestohlen!" 'as though it were stolen from a mirror!' (10)—a cry that expresses Friedrich's aesthetic aspirations perfectly. As a landscape painter, Friedrich equates the complete exclusion of his subjective perception of nature with his ability to portray the Real. His (ostensibly) realist theory of art demands his own absence from his painting to achieve "maximum verisimilitude" (Jakobson 20). To borrow Holub's words, he strives to be the "mediator" and yet "nothing" (144). The exclusion of people as subjects in his paintings emphasizes his desire to empty his work of all human influence—an exclusion he practices in his solitary personal life as well. According to Friedrich, an artist's ability to mirror nature in his work depends on the degree to which he can exclude his own interpretations from it:

> […] als ich in den Alpen oft vielmal kreuz und quer, hin und wieder gewandert war, sagte ich: soll es denn gar nicht möglich sein, den Dachstein gerade so zu malen, wie ich ihn oft und stets vom vorderen Gosausee aus gesehen habe? Warum malen sie ihn alle anders?

> '[…] having hiked in the Alps many times, going here and there, back and forth, I said: is it impossible to paint the Dachstein exactly as I have so often seen it from the outer Gosau lake? Why do they all paint it differently?' (2)

Friedrich believes that painting the Dachstein mountain as he sees it precludes the possibility of multiple, unique representations of it. He desires to represent the mountain apart from the 'translation' of his subjective perception (cf. Schuller 226) and thus asks, 'Why do they all paint it differently?' This is his initial approach to realist representation, and it is as simple as it is impossible to achieve. His naïve complaint that everyone paints the same object differently fails to acknowledge the subjective perception of each painter.

Friedrich's ideal of mirroring not only rejects his individual subjectivity, but also the conventions of landscape painting that precede him. Indeed, when recounting his training, he recalls that, even after extensive travel and exposure to art museums and exhibits, his question remained: "Warum malen [Landschaftsmaler den Dachstein] alle anders? Was soll denn der Grund sein?" 'Why do landscape painters all paint the Dachstein differently? What is the reason?' (6) Friedrich insists that the various representations of the Dachstein among these artists and their conventions—Romantic, neo-Classical, etc.—are inexplicable. In Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (*Green Henry*; 1855/89), the landscape artist Römer claims that painting must reject the clumsy conventions of the past in order to paint naturally (cf. 13). Similarly, Friedrich's aesthetic is based on the assumption that the outdated conventions of artistic tradition hinder a realist representation of nature.

Subjectivity

The next phase of Friedrich's production—in both visual and literary art—signifies a new vision of realism within the text. When mirroring the visible world in visual art proves unviable, Friedrich turns to an aesthetic that is so radically subjective, it is impossible to situate in any particular tradition or epoch. This subjectivity defines his final landscape painting, which he calls his *Großbild* 'large painting'. It depicts a marsh, the Lüpfing Moor, which belongs to his distant cousin, Peter Roderer. Similar to the *Großbild*, the early pages of Friedrich's introspective narrative do not conform to the literary conventions of one tradition.

Before further examining Friedrich's subjective approach to realism, it will be helpful to briefly consider Roman Jakobson's discussion of realism in his essay "On Realism in Art" (1921). In it, Jakobson resists the notion that realism signifies a defined set of characteristics or a particular moment in literary history. Rather, realism depends on both the artist's and the viewer's ability to set aside familiar tropes in favor of unconventional means of representation. A painting's apparent "objective and absolute faithfulness to reality" (21) is likely an illusion based on the viewer's familiarity with the conventions the artist employs. Because familiarity with the language of artistic tropes leads to an instant, easy recognition of the

painting's subject matter, the viewer may easily and quickly comprehend the tropes without truly seeing the painting. In order to resist this instantaneous recognition of the artwork, Jakobson suggests that the artist may achieve a closer approximation of reality by imposing a new form on his work (cf. 21). The new form is simply an innovative and thus unfamiliar means of representation that upsets familiar conventions of representation (cf. 22). The following section explores Friedrich's *Großbild* and the initial phase of his writing as examples of engagement with a new form.

The Lüpfing Moor Painting

While attempts to conceive of the moor painting's appearance are irrelevant to my argument, the question of how to understand this enigmatic painting's handling of time and space in terms of Friedrich's approach to realism is paramount.[3] Friedrich's focus on time and perspective in the Lüpfing Moor masterpiece is surprising in light of his previous attempts to mirror natural landscapes on his canvas. The *Großbild* is a single, enormous project, composed of myriad depictions of the moor from multiple angles and at various times of day:

> [I]ch wollte Moor in Morgenbeleuchtung, Moor in Vormittagbeleuchtung, Moor in Mittagbeleuchtung, Moor in Nachmittagbeleuchtung beginnen, und alle Tage an den Stunden, die dazu geeignet wären, an dem entsprechenden Blatte malen, so lange es der Himmel erlaubte […]. [D]ie Stunden flogen wie Augenblicke dahin, die Beleuchtungen wechselten, und ich mußte die Stellen aufsuchen, von denen sich die Beleuchtungen am schönsten zeigten.
>
> 'I wanted to paint the moor in morning light, late morning light, midday light, afternoon light, and all possible hours of the day, each on its own canvas, as long as the lighting allowed [...]. The hours passed like the blink of an eye, the lighting changed, and I had to look for the places that best displayed the lighting'. (15)

The layers of time denoted by the variations in *Beleuchtung* 'lighting', and the *Stellen* 'locations' determined by the lighting, define a project unlike Friedrich's preceding paintings. Until this shift in his aesthetic, Friedrich burned each of his paintings, because they failed to fulfill his ideal of mirroring ("Alles, was mir von meinen Arbeiten nicht gefällt, verbrenne ich" 'I burn every piece of my work that I do not like' [7]), but with his marsh painting, he melds together multiple perspectives onto one canvas. Whereas he once found multiple interpretations of the same object suspect, he now attempts a complex interpretation of the effects of time on the Lüpfing Moor.

A brief look at the history of marshes in nineteenth-century Germany will further elucidate Friedrich's fascination with time as expressed in the *Großbild.* Marshes represent a paradoxical intersection of time and space that captured the attention of the scientific community in nineteenth-century Germany. Stefan Willer brings the research of German scientist Arend Friedrich August Wiegmann

to bear on Friedrich's painting. Wiegmann's *Die Entstehung, Bildung und das Wesen des Torfes* (The Origin, Formation, and Nature of Peat; 1837) claims that marshes are rich with centuries of history (cf. 47). For example, in 1830 two human corpses from the time of Julius Caesar were discovered in the waters of a moor in Thuringia (cf. 48). The discovery of these bodies and other similar discoveries gave rise to a perception of the moor as an ancient juncture of space and time: the shallow waters of the moor contain a deep history. Thus Willer observes the following: "Das Moor ist also räumlich verdichtete Zeit und zeitlich dimensionierter Raum" 'So the moor is spatially concentrated time and temporally dimensioned space' (48). This description corresponds to Friedrich's approach to painting the moor since his *Großbild* exhibits a similar compression of time into physical space. Friedrich's decision to create a painting that compresses layers of time into one representation necessitates his interpretation, signifying a shift away from a naïve understanding of realism that simply replicates the appearance of nature, to an aesthetic that aims for highly subjective interpretations of nature's unseen essence.

Although the unconventional 'new form' of the *Großbild* may seem to depart from a realist aesthetic, Jakobson's theory of realism suggests that Friedrich's innovation strips away visual tropes, which turn the work of art into "an ideogram, a formula, to which the object portrayed is linked by contiguity" (21). The uncharacteristic compression of time and perspective that Friedrich's painting depicts resists the viewer's easy understanding, while conveying the real depth of time contained in the space of the marsh. The new form, which Friedrich imposes (cf. 21) on the painting, comes closer to capturing the invisible relationship between time and space in the marsh, which would go unnoticed in his former approach to realism.

The *Großbild* represents an aesthetic transformation that corresponds to changes in Friedrich's personal life. The increasing involvement of his relative Peter and his family in Friedrich's otherwise solitary life catalyzes Friedrich's new approach to painting. Friedrich's friendship with Peter and his love for Peter's daughter Susanna breathe life into his work. He comes to see the Lüpfing Moor as *düster* 'bleak', *einfach* 'simple', and *erhaben* 'sublime' (66) and forgets his previous obsession with painting a landscape 'as it is' (cf. 6). The growing acceptance of his subjectivity includes a sense that his work is alive—a sharp contrast to earlier characterizations of his works as *Misslingen* ('failure' or 'miscarriage') (7). This newfound aesthetic life is most vivid in a passage that comes directly after a *rendezvous* in which Friedrich finally expresses his love to Susanna. After this encounter, when Friedrich returns to his painting studio, he confronts a living being: "Mit wallendem Herzen ging ich in mein Zimmer. Dort schaute mich ruhig von seinem Gerüste mein großes Bild an" 'With a pounding heart, I went to my room. My large painting was looking at me calmly from its frame' (56). The work of art looks at him peacefully, responding to his emotional state. Rather than passively mirroring nature, the *Großbild* reflects the robust agency of his own subjectivity.

Even with love inspiring his new phase of painting, Friedrich fails to attain his ultimate goal of painting the *wirkliche Wirklichkeit*: "Mein großes Bild […] kann die Düsterheit, die Einfachheit und Erhabenheit des Moores nicht darstellen. Ich habe mit der Inbrust gemalt, die mir [Susannas] Liebe eingab, und werde nie mehr so malen können. Darum muss dieses Bild vernichtet werden" 'My great painting cannot portray the moor's dreariness, simplicity, and sublimity. I painted with all of the fervency that Susanna's love gave me, and I will never be able to paint like that again. Therefore, this painting must be destroyed' (66). Although love provided him with the lens to see the essential qualities of the moor, love could not enable him to capture the moor's 'quintessence' (cf. Begemann 27). Like all of his earlier paintings, Friedrich burns the *Großbild* after determining that, although love has elevated his painting to its apex, the painting still falls short of capturing the Real.

Writing, Phase 1

Like his landscape painting, Friedrich's writing also undergoes a drastic transformation. But whereas the first phase of his painting is characterized by a lack of subjectivity, the first phase of his writing is highly subjective and unconventional. In the first half of his narrative, he does not adhere to the dictates of one genre, nor to any rigid principles of orderly composition; rather, his writings are a fairly free-wheeling conglomeration of themes and genres, all centering on his life and expressing his thoughts, plans, and experiences. Another aspect of Friedrich's presence in his text is the close relationship between the time the events occur and the time he records them: he often describes events within days of their occurrence. Rather than the conventions of a genre or tradition, Friedrich's personal experience fuels the progression of his writing.

Dirk Oschmann describes the eclectic quality of Friedrich's writing thus: "nicht nur […] durch einen sehr uneinheitlichen Stil geprägt, sondern auch durch eine eigentümliche, gattungs- und erzähltheoretische Unentschiedenheit, insofern der Text zwischen Erzählung und einer Art Tagebuch zu oszillieren scheint" 'characterized not only by a very chaotic style, but also by an uncertainty in regards to the content and the theories of genre and narrative, for the text seems to oscillate between a narrative and a sort of journal' (139). The chaotic style bespeaks an author who employs writing to think through encounters and explore ideas; that is, his writing mirrors both his inner and outer life. Organized by no other structure than his own whim, Friedrich addresses the following themes, moving from one to the other without a discernible system: the history of his artistic development, reflections on past projects, speculations about his future as a painter, his own philosophies of art, his plans for painting the moor, a record of his pivotal conversation with Peter, as well as encounters with his landlady and with the Roderers and their friends (3-9, 15, 40).[4] Furthermore, Friedrich's emotional fluctuations color his narrative; he unabashedly communicates his ideas and experiences through the lenses of his skepticism, scorn, embarrassment, passion, and love. Friedrich's highly

inflected and variegated narrative is a vastly different project than his precisely composed, ostensibly objective paintings, and instead resemble the subjective aesthetic of the *Großbild*.

The lack of organizational and stylistic unity in the narrative is intensified by haphazard changes in verb tense. The unity of the multiple temporalities Friedrich orchestrates in the *Großbild* is expressed as a cacophony in his initial writings. The first few pages of his narration include sentences in the perfect tense, present tense, and imperfect. The alteration between perfect and imperfect tenses is perhaps the most enigmatic, for while Friedrich's use of present tense is often a means of relating past experiences to the emotions and reactions contemporaneous with his writing, there is no such apparent motivation for his occasional use of the perfect tense. Furthermore, Friedrich's temporal distance from his narrative varies: he sometimes writes within a day or two of the experiences he records ("Als es gestern seit den drei Tagen, die ich im Lüpfhause bin […]." 'Yesterday, after being at the Lüpfhause three days […].' [10]), at other times he records ongoing events ("Ich male jetzt wieder […]." 'I am painting again […].' [9]). Because he writes as events occur and not in conformity to the dictates of a narrative form, the earliest pages of his writing lack a teleological arc. Willer claims that these temporal inconsistencies obscure the boundaries between the narrator and his story (cf. 55). Indeed, the early pages of Friedrich's narration appear almost to achieve the unmediated representation he desired for his early landscape paintings, except that his inner subjectivity is the object of representation.

Convention

The final phase of Friedrich's engagement with realism occurs after he abandons landscape painting. Like his aesthetic of mirroring, the final phase of Friedrich's story is defined by an absence of subjectivity and creativity. However, unlike his early approach to painting, in the final pages of the novella, both his writing and personal identity embrace literary and societal conventions to the complete exclusion of his individual voice and identity. He becomes a stereotypical Roderer and his narrative takes the shape of a generic love story.

Identity

By narrating his family's history, Peter strongly influences Friedrich's painting and ultimately his personal and professional life. Before he knows that Friedrich is a distant relative, Peter recounts the history of the Roderer family—a history of ambition, failure, and repetition: "'es lebt seit Jahrhunderten ein Geschlecht, das immer etwas anderes erreicht hat, als es mit Heftigkeit angestrebt hat. Und je glühender das Bestreben eines dieses Geschlechtes war, desto sicherer konnte man sein, daß nichts daraus wird'" 'for centuries there has been a family who always achieved something other than what they intensely pursued. And the more fervent their pursuit was, the more certain it was that nothing would come of it' (25). Peter follows

these introductory claims with examples of how the pattern of failed pursuits found its expression in the lives of Roderer men and in his own life. Eventually, Friedrich's personal narrative comes to reflect the Roderer pattern, fulfilling Peter's prediction that Friedrich will leave his painting career. Although Peter's prophecy appears incredible to Friedrich ("Ich werde nie meinem Streben untreu werden, und ich werde nie der Landschaftsmalerei entsagen" 'I will never forsake my ambition and I will never give up landscape painting' [27]), Peter makes this claim based on characteristics he observes in Friedrich which echo his own personality and experience. These qualities led Peter himself to give up his writing career and join the repetitive Roderer narrative. He believes that the propensity for repetition and replication is intrinsic to the Roderer family:[5]

> Ich beschloß, alle Heldendichter zu übertreffen, und die wirkliche Wahrheit zu bringen [...] und da ich mit Anwendung aller meiner Zeit und Kraft Neues dichtete, und dasselbe nicht größer war als die bestehenden Lieder, und die wirkliche Wahrheit nicht brachte, dichtete ich nicht mehr und vertilgte alles, was ich gemacht hatte […]. Es war eine Leere gekommen.
>
> 'I decided to exceed all the epic poets and to offer true reality [...] I exerted all of my time and strength to write something new, but my poetry was no better than the existing poems and it did not convey true reality, so I gave up poetry and destroyed everything that I had written [...]. A void had come.' (34)

The *Wirklichkeit* that both Peter and Friedrich fail to represent leads—or will lead, in Friedrich's case—not to a more fervent pursuit of the Real in art, but to a pursuit of the Real in bourgeois community. Friedrich eventually conforms to the Roderer narrative, gives up painting, and marries Susanna. The desire for the replication of nature in his paintings finds its new expression in replicating the Roderer story, both by enacting it, and by narrating it in writing.

Writing, Phase 2

Friedrich's encounter with Peter leads not only to the end of his painting career, and to his loss of individuality, but also to the failure of his writing as he assumes the repetitive predictability of a Roderer. Matthias Kamann observes the loss of individuality inherent in the Roderer identity, and the reflection of this loss in the novella:

> Was also Roderer-Identität genannt werden kann, ist […] ein [...] grundsätzlich mimetisch orientierter Energie: jeder lässt seine Kräfte zunächst zu einem scheinbar allerpersönlichsten Ziel walten, kann sich aber, da jene Energien statt auf Subjektivierung auf Mimesis zielen, darin nicht erfüllen und biegt aus solcher Entfernung von der Wirklichkeit seiner Kräfte auf jene zurück.

> 'Therefore, what can be called the Roderer identity is […] a […] fundamentally mimetic-oriented energy: each member exercises strength for a seemingly personal aim. However, he cannot accomplish this aim because, instead of directing energy towards his subjective development, he directs it towards mimesis and thus veers from the reality of his powers back to mimesis'. (240)

Kamann's metaphor for the identity of the Roderer family as a mimetic energy that flows from one person to the next—and eventually to the text itself—is apt. However, because the mimetic impulse overpowers and kills the subjectivity and *Wirklichkeit* of the characters and text, I am more inclined to compare it to a disease that infects the story's characters, destroying their individuality and thus their creative agency. Friedrich's writing comes to reflect his loss of personhood via the Roderer identity, for his distinct presence in the text fades into tropes and caricatures.

The scene in which Friedrich and Susanna finally declare their love to each other is the point at which Friedrich's text flattens as he submits his subjective voice to the conventions of Roderer identity (i.e. the Roderer story). Their declaration of love is an excellent example of the clichés that characterize the rest of his story—clichés which the Roderer narrative have imposed on him:

> Mit stürmender Brust ging ich gegen sie. Als sie nahe war, und als ich sie sah, daß sie heute blasser sei, rief ich: "Susanna, Susanna!" Sie sah mich liebend an und reichte mir beide Hände hin. Ich ergriff die Hände, riss das Mädchen gegen mich, und schloss es an meine Brust. Unsere Arme umschlangen sich, und ihr heißer Mund glühte auf dem meinen.

> 'With a pounding chest I approached her. As I got closer and saw that she looked paler today, I called 'Susanna, Susanna!' She looked at me lovingly and gave me her hands. I took her hands, pulled her towards me, and held her to my breast. Our arms entwined and her hot mouth touched mine'. (54)

The scene is filled with familiar tropes: violent love empowers an otherwise timid man to boldly approach the object of his love. The passage is as formulaic as Friedrich's earlier writing was erratic, not only in its content, but also in its corresponding style and melodramatic tone. In light of his loss of narrative agency in his text, it is not surprising that, whereas the novella begins with a statement of Friedrich's identity ("So bin ich unversehens ein Landschaftsmaler geworden" 'So I suddenly became a landscape painter' [3]), it ends with a statement about the Roderer family and Peter specifically: "Die anwesenden Roderer sprechen dem Rheinwein in solchem Maße zu, dass die Voraussage der Lüpfwirtin zutrifft und Peter Roderer seine Gäste mit dem Wagen heimschaffen lassen muß" 'The Roderers present request such quantities of the Rhenish wine, that the hostess' predictions come true and Peter Roderer must provide a wagon for his guests' journey home' (88). The Roderer story has robbed Friedrich of his individualized narrative voice,

and so a banal love story replaces the erratic journal entries. The predictable structure, which propels the narrative toward Friedrich and Susanna's marriage, replaces the intensely personal experiences and thoughts of the first half of the text. The tropes and the conventional language Jakobson claims can obscure representations of the Real in painting, now appear in Friedrich's writing, also effacing the Real.

Intersecting at the Real

Friedrich's failure as a painter and writer and his choice to assume the Roderer identity of husband and progenitor of Roderers appear to bespeak the incommensurability of art and domestic life, and ultimately the triumph of the latter. Laurence A. Rickels argues for the incompatibility of Friedrich's role as a painter and the domestic identity central to members of the Roderer family when he states that Friedrich's "attempt to commemorate divine creation [in painting] gives way to acknowledgment of his surname" (587). Indeed, the Roderer identity seems to preclude artistic pursuits, both for Peter and for Friedrich. Peter A. Schoenborn observes: "Dieses Geschlecht trägt […] einen sprechenden Namen: Roderer sind Leute, die dem Geschäft des Rodens, also des—kritischen—Kahlschlags nachgehen, damit auf dem frisch gewonnenen Boden etwas Neues, ihren Anforderungen Genügendes angebaut werden kann" 'This family has a meaningful name: Roderers are people who clear the land, and thus pursue the critical job of deforestation. Something new and sufficient for their demands can be cultivated on the ground they thus gain' (496). The very action of *roden* ('to uproot' or 'to clear'), which the name Roderer implies, bespeaks tangible rather than conceptual or artistic productivity. Peter Roderer confirms this binary of the artist and the Roderer when he raises a toast at Friedrich and Susanna's wedding:

> Der hier anwesende Friedrich Roderer […] hat in der letzten Zeit gezeigt, daß er ein ganzer Roderer ist. Meine Tochter Susanna hat auch nicht ermangelt, sich als Rodererin darzutun; heute haben wir beide ehelich zusammengefügt, es muß also von ihnen noch Rodererischeres kommen, als von anderen Roderern.
>
> 'In these last days, Friedrich Roderer […] has shown himself to be a Roderer through and through. My daughter Susanna has also shown herself to be a Roderer. Today we have brought them together in marriage, so even more Roderer qualities will surely follow, as well as new Roderers.' (67)

Friedrich has shown that he is a 'complete' Roderer—and even more of a Roderer than the others—by forsaking his passion for art so that he can magnify the essence of the Roderer family. The reproduction of Roderers in life replaces reproduction of nature in paintings. Although he focuses on the immediate relationship between Friedrich and Susanna rather than on their role as reproducers of the Roderer race, Gerhard Plumpe affirms this division between art and family life: "Der Besitz der schönen Frau ist das höchste dem Künstler erreichbare Ziel, und so ist es nur

folgerichtig, dass Roderer auf seine Malerei verzichten wird, um sich im Leben als tätiger Mann zu erweisen" 'To have the beautiful woman is the loftiest attainable goal for the artist, and so it follows, that Roderer will give up his painting in order to prove himself an active man' (78). According to Plumpe, because Susanna's beauty is the *wirkliche Wirklichkeit* that Friedrich strives to portray in painting, his marriage to her precludes his continued attempts to capture that beauty in painting.

The understanding of the artist and human community as mutually exclusive is not unique to *Nachkommenschaften*. Barbara Neymeyr characterizes the familiar chasm between art and domestic life in Stifter's novella as the familiar opposition of art and life (cf. 192). Perhaps the most famous painter-narrator of German literature is the protagonist of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*; 1774). Although one would be hard-pressed to find Werther actually painting in the novel, the work participates in the discourse of the artist whose genius renders him unfit for domestic life and whose passionate love for a woman deters his artistic pursuits (12). The emotional sensitivity that enables Werther's capacity as an artist stifles his ability to thrive in society. Similarly, the protagonist of Büchner's *Lenz* (1835) is a writer who suffers estrangement from society resulting from mental illness. Holub describes the function of art for Lenz as escapist: "By taking up the topic of life and the possibility of existence *in art*, Lenz is able to forget his own life and existence *in the real world*, or at least in the fictionalized 'real world' of the novella" (40). Here again, the division of art and the 'real world' bespeaks two discrete realms which, when they intersect, lead to the artist's failure.

Despite the pervasiveness of representations of art's incompatibility with human community—whether that community is expressed as romantic love, domestic life, or engagement in society—and the appearance of their exclusivity in *Nachkommenschaften*, the text includes a fleeting moment in which art flourishes *because* of human presence. Before Friedrich decides to give up his painting career and before his writing descends into banal storytelling, he records an experience in which art, writing, and human presence briefly intersect. The result is an encounter with the *wirkliche Wirklichkeit*. This moment is notable because in it, art and writing harmonize, and subjectivity meets convention. When Friedrich breaks a precedent established in the early pages of the novella by sketching a scene of human activity rather than a landscape, his writing and art become part of the same poetic impulse.

This momentary intersection between art, writing, and human presence takes place when Friedrich sketches a village festival. On the day of the festival, he becomes restless and leaves his painting studio to go for a walk, hoping to cross paths with Susanna. When he sees the festival, he lies down at the edge of a forest and begins to sketch the scene, viewing it through a hole in a stone wall. Friedrich's drawing violates his stated philosophy of art, because it celebrates human presence and subjectivity.

Although he consistently maintains that he is a landscape painter, human activity is the subject of the festival sketch:

> Ich [sah] ein seltsames Bild vor mir. Auf dem Wiesenanger, der sanft abwärtsgehend an das Gehölze stieß, und teilweise auch auf den abgeernteten Feldern waren Buden aufgeschlagen, waren Tische mit schmausenden Menschen, waren Kegelbahnen, Scheibenschießen, Schaukeln, Musikbühnen, Tanzplätze, und ich weiß nicht, was sonst noch, von Stangen mit wallenden Fahnen überragt, und durchwimmelt von bunten Menschen aus Lüpfing, Kiring, Firnberg, Zanst und den weiteren und näheren Umgebungen. Ich blieb stehen und schaute über das Ding hin. Dann nahm ich mein Zeichnungsbuch heraus und beschloss einen Abriss dieser Sache zu machen.
>
> 'I saw an unusual picture before me. On the meadow, which sloped gently up towards the woods, and situated partly on the harvested fields, were open tents, tables with people feasting, yard games, target shooting, swings, music stages, dance floors, and I do not know what all. Poles topped with swelling banners flew over everything, including the teeming crowd of lively people from Lüpfing, Kiring, Firnberg, Zanst, and the surrounding regions. I stood still and looked at the scene. Then I took out my drawing pad and decided to draw a sketch of it'. (50-51)

His exclusive devotion to landscape vanishes as he begins to sketch the 'unusual picture.' It is significant that Friedrich (and later Peter and Susanna) identifies the scene as an ideal subject for visual representation. Upon seeing the festival, Peter Roderer states: "ein Maler könnte kaum einen bessern Platz wählen, wenn er es malen wollte. So etwas sieht man am lebendigsten in Holland" 'a painter could hardly choose a better spot, if he wanted to paint this. One sees the liveliest versions of this in Holland' (51). Susanna, too, calls her view of the festival a picture (cf. 53). This shared interpretation of the celebration creates a community of perception, which is foreign to Friedrich's ideal of absence. Furthermore, the scene's resemblance to the genre paintings of Dutch artists such as Pieter Bruegel and Jan van Steen, which Peter alludes to when he identifies Holland as the ideal place for such scenes, situates Friedrich's art within the context of a community and tradition of painters. Friedrich's presence in these communities begins to override his former absence from his own paintings, his family, and society.

In addition to its participation in the Dutch conventions of genre painting, the human elements of the festival distinguish Friedrich's sketch from his earlier paintings. Although it is situated on the edge of a forest, the scene itself does not include elements of nature. Human-made objects replace natural elements in this sketch. Instead of trees, mountains, skies, and moors, the scene includes people, human-made objects, activities of human community, and communities.

Stifter's extensive lists of people, objects, and villages in this passage is unsurprising—many of his works include, amid detailed descriptions of nature, lists of the elements composing the scenes he describes. However, unlike the description

of the village festival, Stifter's lists usually enumerate elements or aspects of nature. For example, in the novella *Granit* (Granite; 1853), a grandfather teaches his grandson about the history and natural landscape of their homeland, sometimes listing the elements of nature as he describes the countryside: "Dort stehen die Tannen und Fichten, es stehen die Erlen und Ahorne, die Buchen und andere Bäume wie die Könige, und das Volk der Gebüsche und das dichte Gedränge der Gräser und Kräuter der Blumen der Beeren und Moose steht unter ihnen" 'There, like kings, stand the fir and spruce, the alder and maple, the beech and other trees, and the nation of bushes and the dense throng of grasses, herbage, flowers, berries, and mosses are among them' (51). Unlike the grandfather's description, Friedrich's scene is composed of exclusively human elements.

In addition to the subject matter of his sketch, Friedrich's use of perspective and time differ here greatly from his early works. Whereas he usually creates a controlled location from which to observe and paint, whether by setting up his portable chair and umbrella (cf. 4) or building a room in which to paint the moor (cf. 18), here he simply lies down on the ground on the far side of a stone wall to observe the scene through a hole. His willingness to release control over his environment exemplifies the loosening of the rigidly defined ideal, which dictated his earliest landscape paintings. Furthermore, unlike the unification of multiple temporalities he strives for in the *Großbild,* and the many hours he invests in creating his masterpiece, Friedrich sketches this scene of celebration very quickly; in fact, Peter Roderer's family interrupts him before he can complete it, foreshadowing their role in permanently ending his painting career. Nonetheless, Friedrich draws our attention to his uncompleted drawing. He calls it an *Abriss* ('outline' or 'sketch'; 51)—a word that, because it denotes the earliest stages of a work of art, emphasizes the process of representation instead of its completion and underscores the brevity of the process. The significance of the festival sketch is located not in a product which captures or unifies time, but in an active process that takes place within time: the act of sketching the festival becomes a moment of interaction in which Friedrich uses art to participate in multiple communities.

While the festival scene represents a significant moment for Friedrich's painting, it also unifies Friedrich the writer and Friedrich the painter. In representing this scene of artistic epiphany, Friedrich verbally frames the scene with two statements about himself as viewer, setting himself apart from the scene ("[…] ich [sah] ein seltsames Bild vor mir" 'I saw an unusual picture before me' and "[i]ch blieb stehen und schaute über das Ding hin" 'I stood still and looked across at the thing' [50]). Within the frame he combines rhythmic language with visually rhythmic images in the description of the wind-whipped banners and colorful crowds: "Stangen mit wallenden Fahnen überragt, und durchwimmelt von bunten Menschen." The description of festival activities also follows a rhythmic pattern, in that the number of syllables gradually decreases as the list progresses: "auf den abgeernteten Feldern waren Buden aufgeschlagen, waren Tische mit schmausenden Menschen, waren

Kegelbahnen, Scheibenschießen, Schaukeln, Musikbühnen, Tanzplätze, und ich weiß nicht, was sonst noch." The repetition of [sh] in the words "schmausenden," "Scheibenschießen," and "Schaukeln," and of [k] in "Kegelbahnen," "Schaukeln," and "Musikbühnen," and the many words that end in "n" lend the language poetic vibrancy. Similar repetitions of sound are present in the list of villages as well. Unlike the reoccurring Roderer story, whose pre-determined structure undermines individual artistic representation, Friedrich's description utilizes the repetitious elements in the scene to create poetry. However, he cannot sustain this artistic insight, for as soon as the Roderer family approaches, the artist stops drawing and the poet resorts to banal reports of what he observes.

In conclusion, the tension in *Nachkommenschaften* between subjectivity and convention in both painting and writing resolves at their intersection. Love transforms Friedrich's painterly perspective: he is able to interpret the moor freely after falling in love with Susanna. In contrast, the Roderer narrative has a very different effect on Friedrich's writing; the highly personalized and introspective qualities of his writing before hearing his family's story disappear once Peter recounts the Roderer history. Upon hearing the Roderer narrative, Friedrich's love story becomes trite and over-determined. In the end, his career as a painter ends. The love that gave him new eyes for nature and which breathed the humanness and life of his early writing into his landscapes is not sufficient to represent what he now sees. Love provides the ability to see the essence of nature, but not the means of representing it. On the other hand, embracing his identity as a Roderer saps the poetic energy from Friedrich's writing and he resorts to tropes of love in his description of his relationship with Susanna. Although it appears to come and go without Friedrich's realization, the moment he sketches the village festival reveals that the *wirkliche Wirklichkeit* cannot be contained within a gold frame or narrative structure. Rather, the Real appears when a subjective experience of the material world vivifies aesthetic convention.

Notes

[1] The "commemorative function" of art in Theodor Storm's *Aquis submersus* is a fitting description of the protagonist Johannes' works, which include the portrait of his lover Katharina, a depiction of the New Testament account of Lazarus' resurrection, and a portrait of Johannes' dead son (Holub 141). In the case of Katharina's and the son's portraits, visual representation is the means of making an absent person present: portraits are "a reminder to the viewer, helping to recall something otherwise inaccessible" (Holub 141). The painting of Jesus raising Lazarus to life highlights the ambitious ideal of the realist artist to make present the dead or absent subject via art. Painting is thus a substitute for an inaccessible reality. Similarly, Friedrich Roderer intends his *Großbild* to serve the function of commemoration. Because Peter Roderer plans to develop the marsh, Friedrich, like Johannes, seeks to "overcome time" and "make the

absent present" through painting (142). Because painting stands in for an absent reality, it must reproduce that reality as faithfully as the artist is capable of portraying it.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[3] Scholars have speculated about the appearance of Friedrich's enigmatic marsh painting and the artistic traditions to which it might be compared. Cubism, Avant-garde, and pop art are among their suggestions. See Begemann 27 and Hahn 61.

[4] Katharina Grätz argues that the common, everyday themes that Friedrich addresses become paradoxically strange and alienating within the context of literary representation. See Grätz 148.

[5] Sabina Becker and Katherina Grätz observe that repetition is a common feature of Stifter's writings. They identify ritual as a means of interpreting this repetition: "Unmittelbar verknüpft mit dem Hang zur Ritualisierung ist das Strukturprinzip der Wiederholung, das in Stifters Prosa sowohl auf der Figuren- und Handlungsebene als auch auf der Erzählebene dominant hervortritt. Wiederholung zeigt sich in analogen Satzbaumustern, in formelhaft wiederkehrender Figurenrede, in immer gleichen Handlungsabläufen und der Schilderung sich wiederkehrender Konstellationen…. Die beharrliche Beschreibung solcher repetitiven Figurenhandlungen verleiht diesen rituelle Züge" 'Directly related to the penchant for ritualization is the structural principle of repetition, which appears in Stifter's prose on the level of character and plot, as well as narration. Repetition appears in analogous sentence structures, formulaic and repetitive dialogue, repetitive plotlines, and the representation of configurations that repeat themselves. The persistent description of such repetitive action on the part of the characters lends them ritualistic qualities'. See Becker and Grätz 9.

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