

**The Fiction of Franz Nabl in Literary Context:  
A Re-examination**

**by**

**Matthew Collins**

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## Short Abstract

This thesis re-evaluates the work of the neglected Austrian novelist Franz Nabl. Nabl's reputation has long been overshadowed by the prestige of Jung-Wien, denigrated by inaccurate association with the *Heimatroman*, and even unjustly tarnished by his appropriation during National Socialism. My work aims to correct these misconceptions, demonstrating that his best fiction merits rehabilitation not only in its own right, but also for the important questions it raises about conventional narratives of Austrian literary history. Structured chronologically, the five chapters of this thesis provide fresh analyses of Nabl's texts, many of which have previously received only scant scholarly attention. These close readings are located in a range of relevant literary-historical and cultural contexts, illustrating that Nabl's writing not only belongs in surprising literary company, but also that his works fit into important, yet often overlooked patterns in Austrian literary history which are often obscured by a tradition of criticism which values 'modernism' over 'realism', and privileges the aesthetically progressive over the apparently conservative. The first chapter investigates Nabl's earliest fiction in the literary and cultural context of fin-de-siècle Vienna, revealing unexpected connections between Nabl and acknowledged modernists, such as Schnitzler and Kafka. The second and third chapters engage with Nabl's novels, *Ödhof* and *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, establishing his status as a significant critical realist within a long tradition of Austrian works exploring unhappy family life. The fourth chapter focuses on the misleading view of Nabl as a regionalist, demonstrating that, while not all *Heimat* novels deserve critical condemnation, Nabl's narratives of rural life invoke the conventions of the *Heimatroman* only to disappoint them. In the last chapter, I explore Nabl's complicated relationship to National Socialism, showing that, although his involvements with the Nazis were ill-judged, Nabl was not committed to their politics and wrote only politically innocuous fiction during the regime.

## Long Abstract

### State of Research

The novelist Franz Nabl began his literary career in Vienna during the early years of the twentieth century. His earliest works, thus, appeared in the very period of Austrian literary and cultural history which has dominated recent research on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Yet while Nabl's fiction, especially his major novel *Ödhof. Bilder aus den Kreisen der Familie Arlet* (1911), was well received by contemporary critics, his texts have attracted only scant attention from modern scholars. One explanation for this neglect is the common perception, established by early reviewers and perpetuated later, that his writing constitutes either a reaction against the modernist aesthetics of Jung-Wien, or else, that it is a solitary occurrence in Austrian literature, isolated from mainstream literary trends and movements.<sup>2</sup>

However, the main reason for Nabl's relative obscurity is the appropriation of his writing by the National Socialists. After the Anschluss, Nabl's often aesthetically conservative, essentially realist fiction was vigorously promoted as an alternative to the Jung-Wien authors, whose progressive style, uninhibited themes and, in many cases, Jewish ethnicity were considered aberrant by the Nazi regime. It was during this period that the first, and as yet only, monograph on Nabl was published and the first doctoral thesis on his work was written.<sup>3</sup> Although his major novels were written long before the emergence of National

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<sup>1</sup> Most of this recent work is focused on the cultural and artistic complex known as Viennese modernism. For a brief general account see Dagmar Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), pp. 3-9.

<sup>2</sup> Contemporary reviews contrasting Nabl with Jung-Wien include the articles by Theodor Tagger, *Berliner Tageblatt* (28 February 1912) and Paul Zech, 'Franz Nabl: "Ödhof"', *Generalanzeiger für Elberfeld-Barmen* (13 February 1912). August Closs discusses Nabl's alleged literary-historical isolation in 'Franz Nabls Größe und Einsamkeit', *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1184-1194 and also, in a slightly altered English version, 'Franz Nabl's Solitary Greatness', *Oxford German Studies*, 7 (1972-1973), 161-165.

<sup>3</sup> See Erwin Ackerknecht, *Franz Nabl. Der Weg eines deutschen Dichters* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1938) and Elisabeth Tallner, 'Franz Nabls Familienromane' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Prague, 1940). A brief glance at Nabl's 'Werkverzeichnis' also reveals a surge in the number of articles on his work published in 1938. See Franz Nabl, 'Werkverzeichnis', *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1334-1372 (p. 1367).

Socialism, and despite his lack of commitment to their politics, Nabl's reputation has never fully recovered from his naïve and poorly judged association with the Nazis.

This is especially regrettable - as I argue in this thesis - since Nabl's fiction is not only worthy of rehabilitation in its own right, but also because it provokes us to question many of the implicit stereotypes underpinning conventional approaches to Austrian literary history. Unfortunately, much of the limited body of scholarship produced on Nabl's writing has failed to recognize this, tending instead to reinforce inaccurate misconceptions about his relationship or, indeed, lack of one, to canonical writers, such as Arthur Schnitzler, Franz Kafka or Thomas Mann. This is particularly apparent in the verdicts of literary historians writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, whose attempts to enhance Nabl's standing usually portrayed him as an unpolitical provincial sage, thereby unwittingly contributing to the notion that his writing has more in common with trivial *Heimatkunst*, than with serious literary art.<sup>4</sup> Such judgements tend to overemphasize Nabl's later and - as I shall argue - lesser work, to the detriment of his earlier novels and stories, a trend apparent in a number of unpublished doctoral theses written after 1945.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, with the exception of Brigitte Noelle's recent thesis on Nabl's reception, there has been no extended attempt to re-evaluate Nabl's fiction since Johann Rieder's substantial, but now dated, dissertation from 1949.<sup>6</sup> My thesis is intended to fill this scholarly lacuna.

Although there is a clear lack of full-length critical studies on Nabl's writing, my research has profited from a number of shorter articles by leading scholars of Austrian

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<sup>4</sup> Examples include Adalbert Schmidt, *Dichtung und Dichter Österreichs im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols (Salzburg: Bergland, 1964), II, pp. 63-66 and Herbert Nedomansky, 'Ein Stiller im Land: Zum 85. Geburtstag des Dichters Franz Nabl', *Die Presse* (15 July 1968).

<sup>5</sup> See Gottfried Hofmann-Wellenhof, 'Franz Nabls Roman "Die Galgenfrist". Eine Interpretation im Rahmen des Gesamtwerkes' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Graz, 1979) and Adelheid Schmutzhard, 'Franz Nabl. Johannes Krantz: Erzählungen in einem Rahmen' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Innsbruck, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> See Johann Rieder, 'Das Epische Schaffen Franz Nabls' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1949) and Brigitte Noelle, 'Franz Nabl: Vom Wiener Romancier zur steirischen Integrationsfigur. Monographische Studie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Rezeption' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1995). Although Noelle's thesis is entitled 'Monographische Studie', she makes little attempt to offer new critical readings of Nabl's individual texts. Instead, she focuses on a detailed and valuable reconstruction of Nabl's reception in various media.

literature. Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler's excellent essay 'Franz Nabl und die Literaturgeschichte' provided a major impetus for my investigation into Nabl's fiction and its literary-historical context in the first place.<sup>7</sup> The work of Klaus Amann on Austrian literature and cultural politics in the 1930s, especially his provocative paper on Nabl's relationship to National Socialism, has proven indispensable for my work on Nabl's later career.<sup>8</sup> The recent handbook on Styrian literature during National Socialism by Uwe Baur and Karin Gradwohl-Schlacher has been an equally valuable point of reference in this respect.<sup>9</sup> More generally, the special Franz Nabl issue of *Studium Generale*, which makes available not only Nabl's 1934 lectures on German drama and prose fiction at the University of Graz, but also his entire correspondence with Arthur Schnitzler, and a comprehensive list of both his own publications and those about him ('Werkverzeichnis') has been a repeatedly useful source of information.<sup>10</sup>

## Methodology

Given the absence of detailed critical interpretations of Nabl's texts, the main focus of this thesis is the close analysis of Nabl's most important fiction. Yet, since the aim of my research is not only to rehabilitate Nabl, but also, more importantly, to show how his fiction raises urgent questions about existing narratives of Austrian literary development, my close readings of Nabl's individual works are always firmly rooted in appropriate literary-historical, cultural and intellectual contexts. In researching Nabl, I have read widely in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, consulting both works which Nabl read himself and others which he most

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<sup>7</sup> See Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, 'Franz Nabl und die Literaturgeschichte' in *Über Franz Nabl: Aufsätze, Essays, Reden*, ed. by Kurt Bartsch and others (Graz: Styria, 1980), pp. 9-27.

<sup>8</sup> See Klaus Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen? Ein Kapitel Rezeptions- und Wirkungsgeschichte' in *Über Franz Nabl: Aufsätze, Essays, Reden*, ed. by Kurt Bartsch and others (Graz: Styria, 1980), pp. 115-142.

<sup>9</sup> See Uwe Baur and Karin Gradwohl-Schlacher, *Literatur in Österreich, 1938-1945. Handbuch eines literarischen Systems* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2008), I: Steiermark.

<sup>10</sup> See *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1171-1376.

likely did not.<sup>11</sup> My intention in pursuing connections between Nabl and the contemporary literary environment has not been to trace lines of influence, but, instead, to unearth connections which cross received epochal and stylistic boundaries, revealing them to be arbitrary. In this sense, it is irrelevant, whether Nabl had read Freud or Nietzsche, Kafka or Werfel. The reception and reflection of popular ideologies and discourses in his writing, his use of central literary motifs and explorations of dominant contemporary themes, all serve to revise the view of Nabl as anachronistic, or isolated from the literature of his period. Even in sections devoted to intertextual readings of works which Nabl definitely knew, for example, of Nabl's *Ödhof* and Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), or of Nabl's story 'Komödie' (1911) and Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (1856), I use canonical texts as points of comparison which enable the contours of Nabl's writing, and its contribution to Austrian literary history, to be more sharply delineated. In other sections, such as my chapter on Nabl's fictions of rural life, I emphasize how Nabl's writing actually contrasts with aspects of Austrian literary tradition, such as the provincial *Heimat* novel, with which he has routinely been associated, revealing his work to be more sophisticated and critical than has been previously thought.

Although the central focus of my thesis is on Nabl's novels and short fiction, I have also studied his plays, his critical essays and samples of his journalistic work, such as his theatrical reviews for the *Neues Grazer Tagblatt* in the 1920s. In addition, I have consulted his correspondence, especially with his publishers Egon Fleischel and Carl Schünemann, and made extensive use of contemporary newspaper reviews of Nabl's individual works. The latter have proven particularly useful in reconstructing Nabl's status among his contemporaries, which has been blurred by his later obscurity and scholarly neglect. All of these materials are collected in Nabl's Nachlass papers at the Franz-Nabl-Institut in Graz, and

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<sup>11</sup> The remains of Nabl's personal library are held by the Franz-Nabl-Institut in Graz. Although some books previously in his possession were damaged in storage and discarded, a full inventory of the original holdings is available for interested scholars. An avid reader and collector of books, Nabl's literary taste was conservative and traditional. Authors, such as Musil or Kafka, for example, are conspicuous only by their absence from his collection.

I am grateful to the staff of this institution, especially Dr. Gerhard Fuchs, for enabling me to access and cite from this valuable resource in writing my thesis. The final chapter of my thesis, especially, which treats Nabl's later life and work and attempts to answer the question of his precise association with National Socialism, would have been impossible without this.

## Synopsis

The structure of this thesis is essentially chronological. In successive chapters, I trace the development of Nabl's literary career from his earliest work, written as a student in turn-of-the-century Vienna, via his major novels, *Ödhof* and *Das Grab des Lebendigen* (1917), to his personal and artistic low point under National Socialism. In the opening chapter, I examine Nabl's best early fiction, focusing on his debut novel, *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr* (1908), and a number of shorter texts, published in the collection *Narrentanz* (1911). My new critical readings of these individual works demonstrate that the young Nabl is neither anachronistic, nor isolated from contemporary literary trends. Instead, I show how he explores themes and motifs which can be considered central to fin-de-siècle literature and uncover unexpected connections between his texts and the work of established literary modernists, such as Arthur Schnitzler.

The second chapter analyses Nabl's best known novel, *Ödhof*, focusing especially on its treatment of the popular contemporary theme of patriarchal conflict. By reading the text comparatively, alongside Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, and investigating thematic links to Expressionist drama, I situate *Ödhof* in literary history, while arguing that Nabl deserves to be recognized as a significant critical realist, whose major novels expose the pathological potential of family life. I provide further evidence for this claim in the third chapter, which

investigates *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, locating it within a longstanding and undervalued tradition of Austrian works treating issues of domestic abuse and family crisis.

In chapter four, I examine the frequent but misleading tendency to associate Nabl's writing with regional *Heimat* literature. Following a discussion of historical discourses of town and country, and the development in the late nineteenth century of the German *Heimatkunstbewegung* and its Austrian equivalent, *Provinzkunst*, I proceed to illustrate how Nabl's narratives of provincial life differ in various key ways from the *Heimat* genre, represented in my analysis, above all, by the popular novels of Peter Rosegger. Nevertheless, by investigating, in some detail, Rosegger's novel of rural decline, *Jakob der Letzte* (1888), I indicate that the critical tradition of denigrating *Heimat* literature as trivial kitsch is itself in need of revision.<sup>12</sup>

In the last chapter of my thesis, I scrutinize Nabl's later life and work, addressing, above all, the pressing and contentious issue of his relationship to National Socialism. Drawing on a wide range of source material, I re-evaluate both aesthetic and ideological aspects of Nabl's fictional and journalistic writings in the period c. 1918-1945, and reconstruct the salient details of his biography during this time. By achieving a better understanding of Nabl's social life, such as the political allegiances of his friends and colleagues, and describing extra-literary and institutional factors, such as where Nabl published his works, which prizes he received, and what if any political statements he made, or can be legitimately inferred from his texts, my analysis seeks to reach a clear, balanced conclusion about Nabl's role in the cultural-political framework of National Socialist Austria. This attempts to be as explicit as possible about the dubious aspects of his association with the

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<sup>12</sup> A major impulse for this section is Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman's excellent recent study *Heimat: A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). A comparable examination of Austrian *Heimat* literature is urgently required.

Nazis, while maintaining that his complex and compelling earlier work should not be forgotten, because of his later political misgivings.

Indeed, when taken together, my investigations of Nabl's fiction, especially of his novels *Ödhof* and *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, combine to stake a strong claim for his critical rediscovery. For reading Nabl's texts in the range of literary-historical contexts explored in my thesis is not only rewarding in its own right, but also provokes us, unexpectedly, to be wary of binary oppositions between realism and modernism, high culture and triviality, and tenacious teleological models of literary development. In this limited sense, Nabl might be considered pluralist and surprisingly modern, rather than old-fashioned and traditional.

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### List of Abbreviations

AW	Franz Nabl, <i>Ausgewählte Werke</i>
BdSÖ	Bund der deutschen Schriftsteller Österreichs
BEP	Hermann Bahr, 'Entdeckung der Provinz'
DSVS	Deutscher Schulverein Südmark
EaB	Franz Nabl, 'Der Entwicklungsroman als Bildungsbuch'
EgA	Franz Nabl, 'Ein gelöstes Anschlußproblem'
FE	Franz Nabl, <i>Frühe Erzählungen</i>
FSA	Sigmund Freud, <i>Studienausgabe</i>
GSW	Franz Grillparzer, <i>Sämtliche Werke</i>
HJ	Franz Nabl, <i>Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr</i>
K	Franz Nabl, 'Komödie'
KDZL	Franz Kafka, <i>Drucke zu Lebzeiten</i>
KSK	Hans Kloepfer, <i>Sulmtal und Kainachboden: ein steirisches Bilderbuch</i>
KSW	Gottfried Keller, <i>Sämtliche Werke</i>
MFA	Thomas Mann, <i>Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe</i>
MW	Franz Nabl, <i>Meine Wohnstätten</i>
NN/FNI	Franz Nabl Nachlass, Franz-Nabl-Institut für Literaturforschung, Graz
P	Franz Nabl, 'Pastorale'
PBB	Wilhelm von Polenz, <i>Der Büttnerbauer</i>
RW	Peter Rosegger, <i>Ausgewählte Werke</i>
SES	Arthur Schnitzler, <i>Gesammelte Werke. Die Erzählenden Schriften</i>
SDW	Arthur Schnitzler, <i>Gesammelte Werke. Die Dramatischen Werke</i>
SHKG	Adalbert Stifter, <i>Werke und Briefe: historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe</i>

SL Franz Nabl, *Steirische Lebenswanderung*  
SNBW Reinhard Urbach (ed.), 'Arthur Schnitzler — Franz Nabl.  
Briefwechsel'

## Introduction

The novelist Franz Nabl is an unjustly forgotten figure of early twentieth-century Austrian literature. Despite the enthusiastic admiration for his work by prominent writers such as Elias Canetti, Peter Handke and Gerhard Roth, as well as a number of attempts to initiate scholarly interest in his writing, Nabl remains largely unknown outside of his adopted home, the Styrian capital, Graz, where he lived permanently from 1934 until his death.<sup>1</sup> There are essentially two reasons for his relative obscurity. The first of these is straightforward: Nabl's writing has been stigmatized – unfairly, as I shall argue in this thesis – because of its appropriation by National Socialism, pre-empting serious scholarly engagement with the literary merits of his texts. The second reason is more complex and is connected to the established narrative of Austrian literary development since the turn of the nineteenth century which has consistently neglected aesthetically and ideologically conservative writers and their works, promoting instead literature perceived as progressive or avant-garde. The most obvious outward manifestation of this bias is the

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<sup>1</sup> See Elias Canetti, 'Rede zur Verleihung des Nabl-Preises der Stadt Graz im Jahr 1975' and Peter Handke, 'Franz Nabls Größe und Kleinlichkeit' both in *Über Franz Nabl: Aufsätze, Essays, Reden*, ed. by Kurt Bartsch and others (Graz: Styria, 1980), pp. 177-179 and 29-40, as well as Gerhard Roth, 'Über den 90jährigen Franz Nabl' in Franz Nabl, *Frühe Erzählungen*, ed. by Peter Handke (Salzburg: Residenz, 1975), pp. 149-154. Attempts to ignite interest in Nabl's writing such as a special edition of the journal *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971) and a collection of essays based on a University of Graz symposium in 1979: *Über Franz Nabl: Aufsätze, Essays, Reden*, ed. by Kurt Bartsch and others (Graz: Styria, 1980) have had little resonance. Nabl scholarship remains essentially restricted to a handful of unpublished university dissertations. The most helpful and recent of these is Brigitte Noelle, 'Franz Nabl: Vom Wiener Romancier zur steirischen Integrationsfigur. Monographische Studie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Rezeption' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1995). For a chronological overview of Nabl's life and work see appendix.

massive prestige of the cultural and artistic complex known as the ‘Wiener Moderne’ which has overshadowed other areas of Austrian literary and cultural production to such an extent as to obscure them altogether.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, recent research has begun to question the centrality of this conventional focus on metropolitan Vienna and its literary culture, registering dissatisfaction with the long-held view that Viennese Modernism marked a radical break not only with German Naturalism but also with its own apparently outdated national literary tradition.<sup>3</sup> Instead, scholarship has started to stress that the cultural environment of turn-of-the-century Austria exhibited elements of both tradition and modernity and to argue in favour of a more pluralistic understanding of the period around 1900.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the tenacious traditional model which sets urban modernism and high art against provincial triviality and *Heimatkunst* still retains much of its influence. This reductive scheme has posed serious problems for scholars interested in rehabilitating Nabl’s fiction, since the author’s writing fails to fit neatly into either of these preconceived literary-historical pigeonholes. Here is a writer whose work appears aesthetically conservative, at times perhaps even old-fashioned, but whose best writing is, in fact, characterized by its frequently contemporary themes and its underlying critical

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<sup>2</sup> A useful perspective on this point is provided by Johann Holzner, ‘Das Verblühen der kritischen Heimatliteratur im Schatten der Wiener Moderne’ in *Akten des XI. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Paris 2005: “Germanistik im Konflikt der Kulturen”*, 12 vols, ed. by Jean-Marie Valentin (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), XI: *Klassiken, Klassizismen, Klassizität*, pp. 277-283.

<sup>3</sup> For a general overview of directions in recent research see Dagmar Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), pp. 3-9. On the integral role played by Hermann Bahr in the original formation of this concept see Peter Sprengel and Gregor Streim, *Berliner und Wiener Moderne: Vermittlung und Abgrenzungen in Literatur, Theater und Publizistik* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), pp. 81-86.

<sup>4</sup> See Moritz Csáky, ‘Die Moderne’ in *Die Wiener Moderne. Ergebnisse eines Forschungsgespräches der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Wien um 1900 zum Thema “Aktualität und Moderne”*, ed. by Emil Brix and Patrick Werkner (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1990), pp. 24-40 (pp. 27-31).

thrust, thus sharing nothing with the stereotypes of the kitschy *Heimatroman*. Almost all of those who have written positively on Nabl have either avoided or failed to recognize the deeper implications of this situation. Thus, they have set his work either in direct opposition to Viennese Modernism, falsely associating it with *Heimat* literature, or instead implausibly portrayed it as isolated from the dominant literary trends of the time.<sup>5</sup> As a result, no detailed account of Nabl's writing exists which adequately locates his work within its literary context.<sup>6</sup> Equally, the important broader issues arising from the apparent resistance of Nabl's fiction to the categories of conventional literary history have yet to be pursued.

The aim of my thesis is to correct this situation. First and foremost, the following chapters provide a series of fresh critical interpretations of Nabl's texts, focusing both on their aesthetic merits and defects, as well as on their relationship to wider patterns in Austrian literature, but also more generally to the German and European literary traditions. Yet my intention is not merely to resurrect or upgrade Nabl's reputation, revealing only that his writing is actually better than has been previously thought. Nor do I intend to slot his work into the pre-existing narrative of literary history. While I will

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<sup>5</sup> On Nabl's alleged literary-historical isolation see U. Baumgartner, 'Werk großer Einsamkeit: Zum 75. Geburtstag Franz Nabls', *Neue Zeit* (Graz, 13 July 1958) and August Closs, 'Franz Nabls Größe und Einsamkeit', *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1184-1194 and also, in a slightly altered English version, Closs, 'Franz Nabl's Solitary Greatness', *Oxford German Studies*, 7 (1972-1973), 161-165. Erwin Ackerknecht, the driving force in attempts to appropriate Nabl for National Socialism, was among the first to portray him as a staunch opponent of the Viennese avant-garde. See Ackerknecht, *Franz Nabl. Der Weg eines deutschen Dichters* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1938), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Scholars have yet to substantially build on the valuable preliminary remarks in Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler's essay 'Franz Nabl und die Literaturgeschichte' in *Über Franz Nabl*, pp. 9-27.

argue that Nabl's fiction, especially his earlier novels, has been seriously underrated, this is not the only reason, nor the most important one, for revisiting his work.

Instead, I will demonstrate that the re-evaluation of Nabl's work is also of crucial importance for the wider questions it raises about the way the standard narrative of Austrian literary history has been constructed and about the dubious polarities upon which it is based. For example, what if Nabl, and by extension also other lesser-known writers, have a much more complex relationship to Austria's literary and cultural traditions than has previously been thought? Might this reveal unnoticed but nonetheless longstanding and central patterns in Austrian writing that have been all but hidden by entrenched scholarly dogmas? The following chapters are concerned with these and related issues in their various manifestations. They unearth surprising thematic and sometimes even stylistic connections between Nabl and writers more commonly associated with modernism. At the same time, they link Nabl's major works to an almost forgotten tradition of critical realist literature in Austria, recently highlighted by W. G. Sebald, which extends back beyond writers such as Ludwig Anzengruber and Ferdinand von Saar into the nineteenth century and still remains a powerful force in the later twentieth-century prose of authors such as Thomas Bernhard and Peter Handke, or in the sub-genre of the 'Anti-Heimat' novel.<sup>7</sup> Nabl's fiction, I contend, plays a crucial role in this long overshadowed area of Austrian literary history.

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<sup>7</sup> See the essays in W. G. Sebald, *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks. Zur österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke* (Salzburg: Residenz, 1985) and especially *Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur* (Salzburg: Residenz, 1991). On the 'Anti-Heimat' novel see Andrea Kunne, *Heimat im Roman: Last oder Lust? Transformation eines Genres in der österreichischen Nachkriegsliteratur* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991).

Since this study is the only recent attempt at a detailed, large-scale analysis of Nabl's literary career, the structure I have chosen is primarily chronological.<sup>8</sup> This enables the reader to develop a sense of the diachronic development of Nabl's writing, and makes clear that the synchronic cultural and literary contexts of his work were constantly changing. For a writer whose first work, the one-act play *Noch einmal....!*, was published in 1905, and who continued to write until the early 1970s, this is an important consideration.

The first chapter comprises a series of new critical interpretations of Nabl's earliest fiction, scrutinizing its relationship to the literary and cultural environment of early twentieth-century Austria. Concentrating on his debut novel *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr* (1908), and on a number of stories from the collection *Narrentanz* (1911), these readings challenge the tendency to view Nabl's work as anachronistic, revealing surprising links between his work and accepted exponents of literary modernism, such as Arthur Schnitzler and Franz Kafka, and emphasizing that his writing actually draws on a wide range of issues and themes central to fin-de-siècle intellectual and literary discourse. The second chapter examines Nabl's most famous novel, *Ödhof. Bilder aus den Kreisen der Familie Arlet* (1911), in its literary context, focusing especially on the important contemporary theme of father-son conflict. Through a sustained comparison with Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), as well as a consideration of the novel's thematic relationship to Expressionist drama, this chapter establishes Nabl's status as a major

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<sup>8</sup> Noelle's thesis is primarily concerned with Nabl's reception. Otherwise, the most recent attempt at a comprehensive account of Nabl's literary career is still Johann Rieder's thesis, 'Das epische Schaffen Franz Nabls' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, 1949).

critical realist, whose best novels turn on the destructive potential of the family. This argument is pursued further in Chapter Three, which analyses Nabl's novel *Das Grab des Lebendigen* (1917, reissued in 1936 as *Die Ortliebschen Frauen*), situating it within a broad tradition of works dealing with issues of domestic abuse and the crisis of the family in Austrian literature, and comparing it, above all, to Adalbert Stifter's story 'Turmalin' (1853) and Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (1915).

Chapter Four addresses the problematic, yet common tendency to associate Nabl's fiction with the provincial *Heimatroman* genre and to view all *Heimat* literature as uninspiring kitsch.<sup>9</sup> After a discussion of the historical conditions and cultural discourses which gave rise to the German *Heimatkunst* movement, and its Austrian variant *Provinzkunst*, I reveal how Nabl's best narratives of provincial life repeatedly engage with the conventions of the *Heimat* genre in order to subvert them. At the same time, though, by comparing Nabl's texts with Peter Rosegger's novel *Jakob der Letzte*, I also show how other works belonging more firmly to the *Heimat* mode also resist the simplified view that fiction focusing on rural life constitutes trivial, ahistorical pastoral. Rehabilitating Nabl's literary reputation by recognizing his distance from *Heimat* literature - I contend - does not necessarily need to occur at the expense of the *Heimat* genre, which is worthy of renewed attention in its own right.

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<sup>9</sup> On the concept of kitsch see Walther Killy's controversial anthology *Deutscher Kitsch. Ein Versuch mit Beispielen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), pp. 9-33. Thankfully, more recent research has begun to recognize that not all *Heimat* literature is guilty of the despicable triviality described by Killy. For example, see Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

In the fifth and final chapter, I turn to Nabl's later life and works, examining the controversial issue of his relationship to National Socialism. Here I evaluate ideological and artistic aspects of Nabl's fictional, journalistic and autobiographical writings immediately before and after the Anschluss, locating them in their political, institutional and literary-historical context. This provides the necessary background for a firm and balanced conclusion about the nature of his personal and public association with the Nazi regime, which neither tries to whitewash Nabl's role in its cultural politics, nor to dismiss his literary career entirely because of his ill-judged political involvements.

## Chapter 1

### **‘Das Leben ist ein Narrentanz’: Nabl’s Early Fiction and the Austrian Fin de Siècle**

#### **Introduction: Nabl’s Early Career and Viennese Modernism**

Although Franz Nabl was born in 1883, in the same year as Franz Kafka, his literary reputation contrasts starkly with that of his famous namesake. Both writers began their literary careers in the Habsburg Empire’s leading centres of urban modernism, but Nabl in Vienna and Kafka in Prague. Kafka, of course, went on to become a figure of international renown, his writing undisputedly marking a high point in the canon of European modernist literature. Nabl, on the other hand, is a marginalized figure, whose work has been regarded – mistakenly, as I shall argue – as either isolated from its contemporary literary environment, or, alternatively, as a decidedly anti-modern reaction against it.<sup>10</sup>

This latter view was promoted especially during the late 1930s by National Socialist commentators, such as Erwin Ackerknecht, who wrote the first monograph on Nabl’s work, portraying the author as the ‘großen Gegner und Überwinder des Wiener

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<sup>10</sup> See footnote 5 above.

Literatentums'.<sup>11</sup> It was, however, already a factor in numerous contemporary responses to Nabl's breakthrough novel *Ödhof*.<sup>12</sup> Nabl's early reviewers, of course, saw his alleged break with the writing of Jung-Wien as a positive quality, which served to recommend his work to a conservative readership grown tired of the supposedly decadent aestheticism of fin-de-siècle Viennese literature. For literary historians, though, the idea that Nabl turned his back on the heights of artistic achievement now routinely associated with Viennese modernism, has proved an almost insurmountable obstacle to the critical reception of his work.

Scholarship on turn-of-the-century Austrian literature has focused so centrally on the writers of Jung-Wien, such as Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Beer-Hofmann, who still enjoy cultural prestige and are considered aesthetically progressive, that it has had little time for apparently peripheral, possibly even anachronistic figures, such as Nabl. Fortunately, more recent research has started to rethink the old stereotype of a homogeneous Viennese strain of modernist literature, propagated, above all, by Hermann Bahr.<sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become increasingly apparent that the Austrian literary landscape at the turn of the century and beyond was

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<sup>11</sup> See Ackerknecht, *Franz Nabl. Der Weg eines deutschen Dichters*, p. 15. Nabl's complicated relationship with National Socialism is explored in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>12</sup> For more details see Chapter 2 below. Nabl himself later gave support to this conception of his writing, portraying *Ödhof* in the autobiographical work *Meine Wohnstätten* as an attempt to transcend the writing of Jung-Wien: '1908 hatte ich mit der Niederschrift jenes Buches begonnen, das [...] vor allem unter die ein wenig schwächlich verspielte Jung-Wiener-Schule gewissermaßen den Schlußstrich zu setzen versuchte.' See *Meine Wohnstätten* (Graz: Styria, 1975), p. 81. Henceforth cited in text as MW with page numbers.

<sup>13</sup> On Bahr's central role in creating the idea of Viennese modernism see Gregor Streim, 'Identitätsdesign und Krisenbewußtsein: Hermann Bahrs Konstruktion einer österreichischen Moderne' in *Moderne als Konstruktion: Debatten, Diskurse, Positionen um 1900*, ed. by Antje Senarclens de Grancy and Heidemarie Uhl, Studien zur Moderne 14 (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2001), pp. 71-85 and Peter Sprengel and Gregor Streim, *Berliner und Wiener Moderne*, pp. 81-86.

marked by the simultaneity of tradition and modernity, by the interplay of progressive and conservative elements. Personal contacts have been noted between the Jung-Wien writers and representatives of the older generation of realists, such as Ferdinand von Saar.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, it has been recognized that leading publications of the literary avant-garde, such as the journals *Moderne Dichtung* and *Moderne Rundschau*, printed a much wider range of material than had been previously assumed, encompassing a broad spectrum of literary styles and embracing both progressive and aesthetically conservative texts.<sup>15</sup> In the context of this scholarly re-orientation toward uncovering the heterogeneous pluralism of early twentieth-century Austrian literature, the early Nabl is a particularly rewarding subject of analysis.

A generation or so younger than the major Jung-Wien writers, Nabl shared the wealthy bourgeois social background that connected most of them.<sup>16</sup> Nabl's father had been employed as a high-up forestry and estates official in the service of the house of Thurn und Taxis. Through a series of successful business investments he amassed a fortune large enough to retire on by 1886, purchasing a large country estate near Mariazell as a summer residence. After attending grammar school in Baden bei Wien, Nabl matriculated as a law student at the University of Vienna. Here he lived a life of leisure, spending most of the early semesters playing billiards in Vienna's famous cafes,

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Hofmannsthal sent Saar a copy of his first drama, *Gestern* (1891), with a sonnet in dedication to the older author. See Peter Sprengel, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur 1870-1900. Von der Reichsgründung bis zur Jahrhundertwende* (Munich: Beck, 1998), p. 272.

<sup>15</sup> See Giselheid Wagner, *Harmonie und Verstörung: Voyeurismus, Weiblichkeit und Stadt bei Ferdinand von Saar* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), pp. 38-39.

<sup>16</sup> Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, Beer-Hofmann and especially Leopold von Andrian were all from affluent families. Felix Salten was perhaps the only Jung-Wien author of humble means. For more detail on the background of the Jung-Wien writers see Dagmar Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne*, pp. 97-103.

visiting the theatre, and, most importantly, making his first fledgling attempts as a writer.<sup>17</sup> Inspired by the plays he saw, Nabl, like earlier Austrian realists such as Ferdinand von Saar and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, initially wanted to become a dramatist. His first published work was the one-act play *Noch einmal....!* (1905), which shows how a fatally ill protagonist, called only ‘der Kranke’, is visited by a series of death-bed premonitions, forcing him to review the actions of his past. This literary debut, which strongly recalls Hofmannsthal’s *Der Tor und der Tod* (1893), was followed in the same year by another play, the three-act verse drama *Weihe*. In this text Nabl explores the classic fin-de-siècle conflict between art and life, treating the fate of a poet who gives up his work for fulfilled love, only for his lover to commit suicide in a conscious attempt to inspire him to further artistic creativity.<sup>18</sup>

Both of these plays were published in Vienna by small publishing houses at the expense of Nabl’s father.<sup>19</sup> Averse to Franz’s literary ambitions, Nabl’s father had shown examples of his son’s writing to his friend, Marco Brociner, cultural editor of the important *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, possibly hoping that a negative verdict might put an early end to Franz’s literary aspirations.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, though, Brociner, himself a minor dramatist, was impressed with what he read.<sup>21</sup> He encouraged the publication of *Weihe*, invited the young writer to accompany him to various dress rehearsals and

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<sup>17</sup> See MW, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> Nabl later noted that the text’s plot mirrors the real-life case of Heinrich and Charlotte Stieglitz, which was unknown to him at the time of writing. See Franz Nabl, *Spiel mit Blättern* (Graz: Styria, 1973), p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Brociner’s most notable literary success was the comedy *Die Hochzeit von Valeni* (1889), which he co-authored with the notoriously kitschy best-selling Heimat writer Ludwig Ganghofer. See *ibid.*, p. 34.

premieres and urged him to rework and extend another one-act piece into the full-length comedy *Die Geschwister Hagelbauer*. Although this play was never published, it was performed on 6 September 1906 at the Kleines Schauspielhaus in the Johannesgasse, where the self-consciously decadent poet Felix Dörmann, a friend of Nabl's brother, was employed as a dramatic advisor.<sup>22</sup> Dörmann, though, was neither the only, nor the most important writer connected with Jung-Wien who helped to launch Nabl's literary career. Nabl owed a much greater debt to Arthur Schnitzler.

Nabl's first contact with Schnitzler came through his own initiative in early February 1907, when the aspiring writer sent the established literary icon a copy of his story 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' (1907).<sup>23</sup> Since Nabl's friend Walter Angel had recognized pronounced similarities between the text's plot and Schnitzler's novella *Sterben* (1894), Nabl wanted to gain the older writer's permission before publishing his work.<sup>24</sup> Schnitzler responded on 6 February, firstly reassuring Nabl that, as far as he was concerned, his story bore only a passing resemblance to *Sterben* ('Ihre Erzählung [...] erinnert nur manchmal irgendwo in den Tiefen an die Grundidee meiner Novelle

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<sup>22</sup> On the initial success of Dörmann's collection *Neurotica* (1891) and his subsequent criticism by other leading Jung-Wien writers see Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne*, pp. 89-91.

<sup>23</sup> In line with the recent emphasis on the heterogeneous nature of fin-de-siècle Vienna, Nabl also sent copies of his earliest works to more conservative members of the cultural establishment, such as the University Professors Jakob Minor and Laurenz Müllner. Though a priest, Müllner shared an apartment with the Catholic writer Marie Eugénie delle Grazie, who read and thought highly of Nabl's drama *Weihe*, and invited him to attend their weekly open house. Here Nabl met prominent right-wing figures, such as the writer, surgeon and later presidential candidate, Burghard Breitenner, and the pan-German historian Heinrich Friedjung. See MW, pp. 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> See 'Arthur Schnitzler — Franz Nabl. Briefwechsel', ed. with commentary by Reinhard Urbach, *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1256-1270 (p. 1256). Henceforth cited in text as SNBW with page numbers. Nabl reflected on this event and its importance for his literary beginnings in MW, pp. 74-75 and 80 and also in the essay 'Gedächtnisworte für Arthur Schnitzler', *Die Literatur*, 34/3 (1931). See the typescript of the essay in Nabl's Nachlass held at Franz-Nabl-Institut für Literaturforschung, Graz, Werkmanuskripte, III/66. Subsequent references to Nabl's Nachlass collection are cited as NN/FNI.

“Sterben”) and secondly, concluding: ‘Aber selbst wenn eine nennenswerte Aehnlichkeit bestände, was nur unverbesserliche Reminiszenzenjäger finden werden, läge nicht der entfernteste Grund vor, von der Veröffentlichung einer Novelle abzusehen, die ganz selbständig erdacht und geschrieben ist, und die Sie überdies geschrieben haben ohne meine Novelle zu kennen’ (SNBW, 1256-1257).<sup>25</sup> Later in the same year, Nabl sent Schnitzler, who was busy working on *Der Weg ins Freie* (1908), the manuscript of his debut novel *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr*. Although Schnitzler’s response to the text was mixed (‘Hans Jaeckels erstes Liebesjahr hab ich gelesen; trotz mancher Banalitäten mit einer gewissen Antheilnahme, die sich an verschiedenen Stellen zu Angeregtheit gesteigert hat’, SNBW, 1259), he still invited Nabl to visit him in Vienna, and, as their correspondence reveals, not only recommended the novel to his publisher S. Fischer, but, following its rejection there, also to the Egon Fleischel Verlag, where it was eventually accepted.

Even though Schnitzler dismissed the significance of seeking parallels between *Sterben* and ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’, and criticized aspects of *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr*, the very fact that Nabl had contact with Schnitzler in the first place is striking. Why did an alleged opponent of Jung-Wien actively seek out one of the group’s major figures, and why would Schnitzler go out of his way to meet with Nabl and help him find a publisher? In light of Nabl’s correspondence with Schnitzler and taking into account the thematic content of his fledgling dramas, the older perception of Nabl

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<sup>25</sup> Schnitzler also sent Nabl a signed copy of *Sterben*, now held in Nabl’s Nachlass-Bibliothek at the Franz-Nabl-Institut für Literaturforschung, Graz.

appears fundamentally flawed and in need of revision. In order to gain a deeper understanding of Nabl's position in the literary environment of early twentieth-century Austria, then, it seems necessary to ask how his early fiction fits into this picture. Might a close examination of his little known early prose works reveal strong affinities to the literary trends of the Austrian fin de siècle? Is his writing less anachronistic and more contemporary than has previously been thought? Are these conceptual categories even useful for apprehending the heterogeneity of Vienna at the turn of the century? Have the literary merits of his fiction gone unrecognized? This chapter attempts to provide answers through a series of fresh critical interpretations of the early novellas 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist', 'Komödie' (1911) and 'Dokument' (1911), and of Nabl's first novel *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr*.<sup>26</sup>

**'Nicht Sterben, Marianne, ... ich will ja leben': The Discourse of Life and Death in Nabl's 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' and Schnitzler's *Sterben***

When Walter Angel told Nabl that 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' bore a close resemblance to Schnitzler's *Sterben*, it is most likely that he was thinking about the motif of a suicide pact between lovers central to the plot of both texts. Had he adopted a more distanced, literary-historical perspective, he would have realized that the motif has a long heritage in Western literature, most prominently recalling Tristan and Isolde, and Romeo

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<sup>26</sup> Since these texts are scarcely known, it will be necessary to re-tell their plots in some detail during the course of my analyses.

and Juliet.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, with the benefit of hindsight afforded to later literary and cultural historians, he might also have noted that the motif was well established in the cultural consciousness of his period. If this was not assured by Keller's actualization of Shakespeare's drama in the novella *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (1856), then it was certainly guaranteed by the popularity of Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1865).<sup>28</sup> Indeed, given the furore surrounding the death, allegedly by suicide, of Crown Prince Rudolf, along with his mistress Baroness Mary Vetsera, at Mayerling in 1889, Austrians were more aware than most that such shocking events might also occur outside of literary works.

All this helps to explain why Schnitzler and Nabl might independently choose to craft works of fiction around this motif, but to answer the question of Nabl's contemporaneity, we still need to know how they treated the motif, for what literary effects it was employed and what, if anything, their texts actually have in common. Did Schnitzler, as a leading exponent of so-called Viennese Modernism, utilize the motif in a characteristically more progressive manner than the alleged opponent of Jung-Wien decadence, Nabl? Or are these received expectations just critical platitudes which actually mask a more complex relationship between these writers and the literary environment of fin-de-siècle Austria?

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<sup>27</sup> See Urbach's commentary in SNBW, pp. 1268-1269.

<sup>28</sup> On Austrian Wagnerism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century see Raymond Furness, 'Geschichte eines Wiener Kindes. Ferdinand von Saar and Austrian Wagnerism' in *Ferdinand von Saar: Ein Wegbereiter der literarischen Moderne. Festschrift zum 150. Geburtstag*, ed. by Karl Konrad Polheim (Bonn: Bouvier, 1985), pp. 158-169.

Nabl's novella 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' begins by recounting the eponymous protagonist's lonely childhood spent living on the outskirts of a small provincial town with his misanthropist uncle Anton, an eccentric figure recalling the uncle in Stifter's *Der Hagestolz* (1844). At the age of twenty, the student Martin meets and falls in love with Marianne Ruff, an eighteen-year-old girl, whose father has purchased the estate bordering Anton Krist's orchard. Marianne, like Martin, has lived a sheltered life, having been schooled at home and has had little experience in forming relationships with her peers. Together Martin and Marianne discover the fulfilling experience of sharing their innermost thoughts and feelings and before long they become engaged.

Whilst sitting in an overgrown part of Anton Krist's garden, they witness the death of a small bird after it is attacked by a cat; Martin spontaneously swears an oath to follow Marianne to her death should anything befall her, and Marianne also agrees to kill herself if Martin dies. However, when she suddenly falls ill shortly afterwards, Martin is confronted with the reality of their pact. Instead of worrying about his fiancée while he returns home to be with her, his thoughts are dominated by his own selfish desire to live, and after learning that she will make a complete recovery, he returns to the city without seeing her, full of relief. This brush with death forces Martin to acknowledge a hitherto hidden aspect of his personality, which he perceives as a kind of *Doppelgänger*, who proceeds to accompany the protagonist: 'Aber auf einmal sah er, daß ein fremder Mensch

da war, ein Mensch den er noch nie gesehen hatte. ... Und doch kam ihm der Mensch so bekannt vor [...]. Wie gesagt Martin Krist befand sich ganz allein im Coupé.’<sup>29</sup>

Influenced by this apparition, Martin changes his lifestyle and moral outlook, immersing himself in the social distractions of Viennese life and encouraging Marianne to do the same, in the hope that she will leave him, freeing him from his oath. However, when it becomes clear that Marianne cannot be seduced by society’s hedonistic allures (‘Das Leben sollte sie verführen und ihn befreien. ... Aber über Marianne vermochte der Fremde sich nicht zu erheben’, FE, 86-87), Martin obeys the Mephistophelean Doppelgänger’s final command and sleeps with a prostitute. By thus living out his impersonal sexual desire, Martin purges himself of the influence of the stranger, yet now confronted by the sober reality of his betrayal of Marianne, he decides to kill himself. Firstly, however, he ritualistically burns his clothes and then dresses himself in the same garments he was wearing on the day of the oath. In conclusion to the story, Marianne fulfils her side of the bargain and commits suicide as soon as she hears of Martin’s death.

This brief synopsis reveals two key parallels between the treatment of lovers’ suicide in Nabl’s story and Schnitzler’s *Sterben*. Firstly, the lovers in both texts begin with the idealistic notion that their romantic attachment is more valuable than life itself. Secondly, one member of each couple comes to reject this conviction during the course of the text after experiencing the sobering effects of their partner’s illness. The overall effect of this second element is the calculated de-mystification of the motif of lovers’

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<sup>29</sup> Franz Nabl, *Frühe Erzählungen*, ed. by Peter Handke (Salzburg: Residenz, 1975), p. 85. Henceforth cited in text as FE with page numbers.

suicide, which is, as we shall see, also shared by both works. Yet there are also differences in emphasis. While Nabl's young lovers enter into their suicide pact naively, at an age where death seems distant and unlikely, Schnitzler's Marie crucially swears to die alongside her lover, Felix, with full knowledge that he has been diagnosed with a fatal illness.<sup>30</sup> This difference is of fundamental importance because the subject matter of Schnitzler's novella is the impact that the conscious downward trajectory towards death has on the psychological state of both of his protagonists.<sup>31</sup>

Structurally, Marie's oath acts as a leitmotif which functions as a recurring measure of changes in the character's attitudes.<sup>32</sup> For example, at the beginning of the text, it is Felix who attempts to dissuade Marie from making the oath, and shortly afterwards scolds her for bringing it up in conversation: 'Wenn du von dem Unsinn noch einmal redest, noch *einmal*, so verschwinde ich spurlos aus deiner Nähe. [...] Ich habe kein Recht, dein Schicksal an meines zu ketten.'<sup>33</sup> However, following a sudden worsening of his condition, which reminds both central characters of his imminent death and destroys the illusions they have created during a summer spent in an idyllic mountain retreat, it is Felix who now reminds Marie of her oath, marking the beginning of their gradual alienation from each other ('Von dieser Stunde an war etwas Fremdes zwischen

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<sup>30</sup> Schnitzler's medically accurate portrayal of Felix's illness has allowed scholars to conclude that he is suffering from tuberculosis, a disease which could be diagnosed but not cured in the late nineteenth century. See Katharina Grätz, 'Der hässliche Tod. Arthur Schnitzlers "Sterben" im diskursiven Feld von Medizin, Psychologie und Philosophie', *Sprachkunst*, 37 (2006), 221-240 (p. 224).

<sup>31</sup> Nabl's later novel *Die Galgenfrist* (1921) provides a variation on this theme, with the crucial difference that his protagonist, also named Felix, is intentionally misled into thinking that he only has a year live.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Carl Pietzker, 'Sterben. Eine nouvelle expérimentale' in *Arthur Schnitzler. Dramen und Erzählungen*, ed. by Hee-Ju Kim and Günther Saße (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007), pp. 31-45 (p. 35).

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Schnitzler, *Gesammelte Werke. Die Erzählenden Schriften*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1961), I, p. 108. Henceforth cited in text as SES I with page numbers.

sie gekommen', SES I, 123). Shortly afterwards, Schnitzler introduces the first of a series of chilling passages which reveal that Felix is, in fact, gradually becoming obsessed with the idea of taking Marie with him when he dies:

Und einmal, es war in der Nacht, bevor sie den See verlassen sollten, überkam ihm eine kaum bezwingbare Lust, sie aus diesem köstlichen Schlafe, der ihm eine hämische Untreue dünkte, aufzurütteln und ihr ins Ohr zu schreien: "wenn du mich lieb hast, stirb mit mir, stirb jetzt." Aber er ließ sie weiter schlummern, morgen wollte er ihr's sagen, morgen, — vielleicht. (SES I, 125)

The shocking impact of this passage is increased by a switch in narrative focus in the next paragraph away from a third-person account of Felix's thoughts, which merges into narrated monologue in the last sentence, towards an account of Marie's thoughts at the same moment in time, which utilizes more extensively the poetic resources of modernist narrative, combining both narrated and interior monologue in rendering her subjective consciousness. This allows the reader not only to learn that while Felix believes Marie asleep, she is in fact lying awake pretending, but reveals that she is also fantasizing about freeing herself from the strains of their relationship:

Die Erinnerung an jene letzte, ernste Unterredung wollte sie nicht verlassen, und sie zitterte vor dem Tage, an dem er die Frage wieder an sie richten wollte. Warum nur zitterte sie davor? Stand doch die Antwort so klar vor ihr. [...] War eine andere Antwort möglich? Wie? Welche? Etwa die: "Du hast recht, ich will dich verlassen. Ich will nur die Erinnerung an den interessanten Kranken bei mir bewahren. Ich lasse dich nun allein, um dein Gedächtnis besser lieben zu können?" Und dann? Unwiderstehlich zwang es sie, alles auszudenken [...]. Sie spürt nicht mehr den traurigen, den fragenden, den sterbenden Blick auf sich ruhen, der sie die ganzen letzten Monate so fürchterlich gepeinigt hat. Sie gehört der Freude, dem Leben, sie darf wieder jung sein. Sie eilt davon, und der Morgenwind flattert ihr lachend nach. (SES I, 125)

The juxtaposition of Felix and Marie's innermost thoughts here subtly outlines the beginnings of their alienation from one another, and the impact of this is deepened by Schnitzler's seamless reduction of the distance between the reader and the character's thought processes. This is achieved especially through a narrative switch from the past to the present tense as Marie's fantasies of escape unfold ('Sie spürt nicht mehr...'). From this point in the text onwards, sections of narrated monologue merging with fragments of interior monologue are employed with increasing frequency, to construct a radical narrative of the ugly realities of death and disease which disavows the common tendency in fin-de-siècle art and literature to transfigure the subject aesthetically.<sup>34</sup>

Strikingly, this is increasingly replaced, as the close of the above passage reveals, by a vitalistic affirmation of the value of life: 'Sie gehört der Freude, dem Leben, sie darf wieder jung sein. Sie eilt davon, und der Morgenwind flattert ihr lachend nach.' Indeed, much of the dramatic tension in the novella is provided by this internal struggle between life and death, between Marie's conscious attempts to suppress her vital urges and her ultimate failure to do so:

Vergeblich suchte sie sich zu überreden, daß all dieses Leben um sie etwas Nichtiges, Vergängliches sei, daß nichts daran gelegen wäre daraus zu scheiden. Sie konnte das Wohlbehagen, das allmählich in sie zu dringen begann, nicht aus ihrem Sinne treiben. Ihr war nun einmal wohl. [...] Wie? Wollte sie's vielleicht zum Vorwurf machen, daß sie

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Hubert Ohl, 'Décadence und Barbarei. Arthur Schnitzlers Erzählung *Sterben*', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 108 (1989), 551-567 (p. 557) and Thomas Anz, 'Der schöne und der häßliche Tod. Klassische und moderne Normen literarischer Diskurse über den Tod' in *Klassik und Moderne. Die Weimarer Klassik als historisches Ereignis und Herausforderung im kulturgeschichtlichen Prozeß*, ed. by Karl Richter and Jörg Schönert (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983), pp. 409-432.

nach ungezählten Stunden tödlicher Abspannung auf eine Minute sozusagen zu sich kam? War es nicht ihr gutes Recht, ihrer Existenz überhaupt nur inne zu werden? Sie war gesund, sie war jung, und von überall her, wie aus hundert Quellen auf einmal, rann die Freude des Daseins über sie. So natürlich war das, wie ihr Atem und der Himmel über ihr – und sie will sich dessen schämen? [...] Wie häßlich das Kranksein ist! (SES I, 150)

In this key passage, Marie's will to live finally wins out over her earlier commitment to die alongside Felix in an epiphany notably free of moral judgement. Instead, as the organic imagery of water ('hundert Quellen'), air ('Atem') and the sky above ('Himmel') implies, this choice is depicted as a completely natural reaction to her situation. Death and illness are no longer associated with art and beauty, as so often in the fin-de-siècle discourse of decadence. Instead, the vital impulses of life ('die Freude des Daseins') are contrasted positively with the ugliness of terminal illness ('Wie häßlich das Kranksein ist!').

By comparison, the way Martin Krist pictures Marianne's suicide, especially how he envisages the serenity of her corpse shortly after their oath, seems to owe much more to conventional fin-de-siècle literary and artistic fantasies of female death:

Er sah seine Geliebte mit geschlossenen Augen und gefalteten Händen auf einem kühlen, weißen Bette liegen, in weißem Kleid und weiße Blüten im Haar ... weiß ihr Antlitz und ihre Hände. Aber auf ihren stillen Zügen lag Ruhe und Gewißheit und ließ sie nicht starr und häßlich werden [...] Martin Krist lächelte, ... ruhig und seines Schwures gewiß ... und dann schlief er ein. [...] Immer tiefer versank das Bett in den reinen blassen Wellen

... und Martin Krist lag da, auf weißen Kissen mit weißem Antlitz und weißen Händen. (FE, 71-72)<sup>35</sup>

The prominence of the colour white in these fantasies reflects the purity which Martin associates both with Marianne and with the idealism of their oath. It is, of course, no accident that the lovers first decide to take the oath, after a euphemistic discussion about their virginity (“Marianne”, er sprach ganz leise, wie mit zusammengepreßter Kehle, “Marianne ... bist du rein? ... Ganz rein?”), FE, 69). Martin places an unusually high value not only on Marianne’s sexual innocence, but also on her honesty, because he regards both as an indication that she, like him, is untainted by the duplicity which Martin associates with the notion of ‘Life’.

The origins of this fervent adherence to the absolute value of truth and loyalty are to be found in Martin’s isolated childhood living with his embittered uncle Anton Krist. Even before the death of Martin’s parents, Anton’s obsessive distrust of the outside world led him to begin a hermetic existence devoted almost entirely to providing a safe haven in his garden for all kinds of song-birds. This activity, which anticipates Dr Schiermayer’s passion for keeping chickens in the later novella *Der Tag der Erkenntnis* (1913), appears on the surface like an innocent pastime, but is in fact a ritual through which Anton, and later Schiermayer, attempt to overcome feelings of impotence by exerting their control on a small area of life:

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<sup>35</sup> On the female death as a literary motif see Elisabeth Bronfen, ‘Die schöne Leiche. Weiblicher Tod als motivische Konstante von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis in die Moderne’ in *Weiblichkeit und Tod in der Literatur*, ed. by Renate Berger and Inge Stephan (Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau, 1987), pp. 87-115 and also Bronfen, *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 141-167. On the depiction of women’s suicide in nineteenth-century literature see Margaret Higonnet, ‘Suicide: Representations of the Feminine in the Nineteenth Century’, *Poetics Today*, 6 (1985), 103-118.

Da hielt Anton Krist Empfang und Musterung wie ein König unter seinen Getreuen, und sein Volk jubelte und zwitscherte ihm zu und sang am frühen Morgen die Landeshymne vor seinen Fenstern. Und wie ein richtiges, wirkliches Land seine Feinde hat und dann und wann mit seinem Nachbarstaate in Fehde liegt, so gab es auch für Anton Krist's kleines fröhliches Reich einen erbitterten Feind: die Katzen aus den umliegenden Häusern und Gehöften. Und Anton Krist war ein tüchtiger Feldherr und Krieger, der sein geliebtes Volk mutig vor Feindeswut bewahrte. (FE, 53-54)

Anton Krist's intervention in the natural order of hunter and hunted, killing any cat which strays into his territory, is important because it symbolizes the conflict between animal instinct and rational will which later plays a central role in both Martin's oath and suicide. Moreover, it makes a deep impression on the young Martin, which is strengthened when his uncle beats him for lying, telling him: 'Eigentlich sollt ich dich totschiagen [...] du Ungeziefer, fängst du auch schon an? ... Menschen, die lügen, soll man umbringen wie Katzen' (FE, 60). Soon afterwards, when Martin innocently asks Anton 'Onkel...was ist Leben?' (FE, 61), his uncle responds with an embittered tirade, informing him: 'Leben ist Lügen! ... Darum hüte dich vor dem Leben ... und am meisten von denen, die es leben! Die lügen ... lügen alle ...' (FE, 61). This statement is linked to Anton's association of flowers with both women and lies, revealed shortly beforehand in response to another of Martin's questions about the absence of flowers in his uncle's garden: 'Blumen? ... Lug! Lug! ... Heute blühn! – Morgen welk! ... Spielzeug für Frauenzimmer! ...' (FE, 60).

Owing to the lack of narratorial comment characteristic of the text, we never discover the actual origins of Anton's fearful hatred of 'Life', but it seems that the sterile,

masculine world he has created for himself serves to protect him from the inevitable loss he connects with the transience of the natural world. Flowers are unreliable precisely because they, like women, lose their beauty with time, but also, the reader senses, because the emotional harmony of love evoked by the blossoming of flowers is equally transient. Of course, Nabl's use of symbolism here strongly recalls the idyllic rose-garden in Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857). Yet Anton Krist's flowerless garden is clearly so far removed from the utopian reflection of Biedermeier values of control, restraint and private cultivation exhibited by Risach's estate in Stifter's novel, as to almost parody it.

Indeed, Nabl's text calls these values into question, showing how nineteenth-century ideals of domesticity and purity are in fact deathly. Krist educates Martin to fear the consequences of lying and life, associating them directly with the barren graveyard where Krist buries the cats he kills (FE, 60). His pedagogical principles also produce the idea that the only good woman is a pure one, and the only pure woman a dead one, which manifests itself in Martin's fantasies about the purity and beauty of Marianne's corpse should she choose to die for him. Moreover, Anton Krist's maxims even prevent Martin from forming friendships at school, since the boy distrusts his schoolmates who tease him about his eccentric uncle and exploit his naivety, condemning him to loneliness: 'Martin Krist zog den gleichen Lauf, die Brust voll Mißtrauen und doch voll namenloser Sehnsucht' (FE, 64). Thus, when read against the background of his lonely childhood and the values instilled in him during the course of it, Martin's and Marianne's oath is a pact intended to bind them together in a desperate und ultimately futile attempt to guard them against the perils associated with the outside world. It is conceived as a symbolic bastion

against the so-called ‘Triumph des Lebens und der Lüge’ (FE, 69), which Martin fears so intensely.

Unfortunately for Martin, the fragility of such constructions becomes painfully clear when he discovers that Marianne has actually fallen ill. Whereas his earlier fantasies of Marianne’s death had promised an idealized aesthetic spectacle, the real possibility of his own suicide fills him with such terror that both he and the reader are prompted to recognize their naivety. Since Martin has just returned from a performance of Gustav Freytag’s comedy *Die Journalisten* (1858), a play which several times alludes humorously to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Nabl has his protagonist wonder how one is supposed to act when poisoning oneself, and whether his suicide might attract comparisons to Shakespeare’s star-crossed lovers:

Mußte man die Flasche dann fortwerfen? Oder gehörte es sich, daß sie neben dem Abschiedsbrief stand, wie ein Zeuge? ... Schade, daß man die folgenden Szenen nicht sehen konnte und nicht hören.... Wie oft würde man von Romeo und Julia sprechen! Mein Gott, in einer so kleinen Landstadt war das noch das bekannteste von all den berühmten Liebespaaren.... (FE, 77)<sup>36</sup>

Yet Nabl’s text soon undercuts any romantic connotations of this comparison with *Romeo and Juliet* by placing Martin’s statement alongside his reflections on the actual indignity of death: ‘Pfui, warum müssen Menschen dabei sein, wenn man stirbt. Warum kann man nicht einfach verschwinden? ... Nicht mehr da sein?’ (FE, 77). The implications here are clear: suicide might be aesthetically pleasing in the theatre, where it is carefully staged to ensure dramatic impact, but the reality of death is private and

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<sup>36</sup> See Gustav Freytag, *Die Journalisten* [1858] (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1918), esp. p. 32 and pp. 60-61.

mundane. Furthermore, Martin's instinctive response to the possibility that he might actually have to die demonstrates that the cultural fantasy of a romantic death is just that: a mere imaginative construct. Martin's earlier visions of Marianne on her deathbed, morbid and beautiful in equal measure, are now tainted by his utterly unaesthetic fear of dying:

Und er würde an ihrem Bette sitzen, die eine Hand auf ihrem toten Körper und die andere.... Da lag sie breit und mit gespreizten Fingern vor ihm auf dem Tisch! ... Und jeder Finger schien sich zu krümmen und ihm zu winken.... O pfui, wie garstig war seine Hand, wie krumm die Finger und wie haarig ... Hastig zog er die Hand zurück und barg sie in der Tasche. (FE, 76)

Here Martin's hand beckons him prosaically and disgustingly towards life, forcing him to revise his belief in the absolute purity of his love of Marianne and its ability to transcend the dictates of his animal nature. Henceforth, 'Life' asserts its hold on Martin's personality, as he experiences a bewildering eruption of vitalism incongruent with his previous identity and the inherited ideals which helped form it. In contrast to Marie in Schnitzler's *Sterben*, this turning-point is not, or not only, a liberating experience but instead exerts an emotional force on Martin's personality which he is unable to process. For this reason, he begins to experience his personality as divided, transferring newfound elements of his personality incompatible with his earlier moral convictions, such as his emergent sex drive, to an imagined Doppelgänger.

Given the tendency to see Nabl as an opponent of Viennese modernism, it is striking to what extent this imaginary double reminds the reader of the Stranger in

Leopold von Andrian's *Der Garten der Erkenntnis* (1895).<sup>37</sup> More clearly though it recalls the Masked Man in Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* (1891), who encounters Melchior in the graveyard scene at the end of the play, telling him that his momentary desperation stems only from the need for a warm meal, and offers to introduce him to the joys of life: 'Ich führe dich unter Menschen. Ich gebe dir die Gelegenheit, deinen Horizont in der fabelhaftesten Weise zu erweitern. Ich mache dich ausnahmslos mit allem bekannt, was die Welt Interessantes bietet.'<sup>38</sup> Similarly Martin Krist's imaginary double is also associated with instinctive physical pleasures. Martin first sees him after devouring a hearty lunch at the railway station, directly after hearing that Marianne will live, thus relieving him of his duty to commit suicide: 'Jeder Bissen schien ihm ein Schritt zurück ins Leben, jeder Schluck Wein ein neuer Tropfen Blut' (FE, 84). The reference to wine here is telling, since it points towards Dionysus, thereby betraying the Nietzschean heritage of the discourse of 'Leben' in Nabl's story.

This is further underlined by the climax of Martin's experience of 'Leben' in the text, his encounter with the prostitute who also drinks wine with him before performing an ecstatic dance for his benefit and then sleeping with him: 'Und sie tanzte in wilden, sinnlichen Sprüngen, daß Martin ihre Füße bis über die Knie hinauf sehen konnte. Und der Fremde saß bei ihm und sagte: "Das ist Schönheit und Leben!"' (FE, 88). This

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<sup>37</sup> Both figures are projections of the protagonists' unreconciled sexual desires. In contrast to the double in Nabl's text, though, Andrian's Stranger is strongly associated with homosexuality. See Jens Rieckmann, 'Knowing the Other. Leopold von Andrian's *Der Garten der Erkenntnis* and the Homoerotic Discourse of the Fin de Siècle' in *Gender and Politics in Austrian Fiction*, ed. by Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 61-78 (p. 75).

<sup>38</sup> Frank Wedekind, *Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in acht Bänden mit drei Doppelbänden*, ed. by Elke Austermühl and others (Darmstadt: Hauser, 2000), II, ed. by Mathias Baum and others, p. 320.

quotation makes explicit the quintessential fin-de-siècle connection between sexuality and life and, in its evocation of ‘Life’ as a sensual dancer, recalls a whole series of dramatic texts around 1900, especially Wedekind’s Lulu plays *Erdgeist* (1895) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1906), Hofmannsthal’s *Elektra* (1904) and Hauptmann’s *Und Pippa tanzt!* (1906).<sup>39</sup> Yet although the notion of ‘Life’ in Nabl’s text is associated with beauty and pleasure, and shown to appeal to our primitive urges, it is also frightening, since it conflicts fundamentally with the rigid moral precepts of Martin’s upbringing.<sup>40</sup> Martin can only give himself to ‘Life’ under the seductive influence of his *Doppelgänger*, whose influence is nullified once Martin has sex with the prostitute. Indeed, this seems to have a cathartic effect on the protagonist, enabling him to return to the outdated morality of guilt and penitence which had governed his previous existence.

Overall Martin’s suicide at the end of the work functions as a self-imposed, yet not unproblematic, sanction for his immoral betrayal of Marianne. While it might appear tempting to read this as a form of poetic justice, viewing Martin’s death as punishment for his infidelity in accordance with the dictates of conventional bourgeois morality, this interpretation overlooks the implicitly critical thrust of Nabl’s text. Since the emotional torment caused by the conflict between these moral dictates and man’s animalistic nature in ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’ is embedded in a narrative of the protagonist’s lonely

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<sup>39</sup> On the intellectual heritage of this popular fin-de-siècle discourse linking sexuality with nature and life see Wolfgang Riedel, *“Homo Natura”*: *Literarische Anthropologie um 1900* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 151-207. On dance as a symbol of life in turn-of-the-century literature see Wolfdietrich Rasch, ‘Tanz als Lebensymbol im Drama um 1900’ in Rasch, *Zur deutschen Literatur seit der Jahrhundertwende: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967), pp. 58-77.

<sup>40</sup> This aspect too is typical of the discourse of life in turn-of-the-century literature. See Wolfdietrich Rasch, ‘Aspekte der deutschen Literatur um 1900’ in *ibid.*, pp. 1-48 (p. 25).

upbringing, the reader is actually invited to ask whether the text's tragic conclusion might have been avoided. Indeed, the link between Martin's suicide and his uncle's unswerving pedagogical principles is indicated by the image of a man with a shotgun, whom Martin thinks he sees pass by him shortly before he kills himself: 'Langsam, aber sicheren Schrittes ging er nach Hause, kein Mensch, kein Wagen kreuzte seinen Weg, und nur einmal glaubte er eine Gestalt an sich vorbeihuschen zu sehen, ... mit knickenden Schritten, die linke Hand in die Hüfte gestemmt, in der rechten eine kleine Flinte' (FE, 88-89). This vision demonstrates that Martin's suicide is connected to the way he has internalized Anton Krist's aggressive hatred of life. In taking his life, Martin thus turns these ingrained values against the vital impulses inside himself, making his death a symbolic indication of their destructive potential. In this way, Nabl's work departs from Schnitzler's *Sterben*, focusing not on the experience of impending death, but on the deathliness of contemporary ideals of domesticity, purity, and renunciation.<sup>41</sup>

### **'Mein Gott! Warum kann er denn nicht noch leben!': Lovers' Suicide and Sexual Morality in Nabl's 'Komödie'**

'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' is not the only one of Nabl's early works to examine the limitations imposed on young people by the outdated codes of sexual morality and

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<sup>41</sup> Since Martin's suicide essentially executes an internalized judgement passed by his substitute-father, it also bears comparison with the death of Georg Bendemann in Kafka's *Das Urteil* (1913). Although Nabl's text does not turn on a direct confrontation between father and son, it is intriguing that both stories end with a victory of the values of the older generation against the young, which is fundamentally connected to a negation of life.

romantic clichés dominant in early twentieth-century bourgeois culture. In fact, the story ‘Komödie’, also published in the collection *Narrentanz*, goes even further than ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’ in exposing the hollowness of these contemporary ideologies.<sup>42</sup> Structured, like ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’, around the motif of lovers’ suicide, this text also benefits from an intertextual reading, in this case alongside Keller’s novella *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*.

The plot of ‘Komödie’ is compact and built around four key episodes. In the first of these, the desperate protagonist Otto Boldewin visits his uncle, a wealthy doctor, at his surgery to ask him for money so that he can marry his sweetheart, Hanna, a girl from an honest family of limited means. Since his uncle had himself married a lower-class girl against the wishes of his family, and borrowed money from Otto’s late father in the process, Otto imagines that he, of all people, might understand his plight and help him out. Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, the doctor rejects his nephew’s plea outright, telling Otto that his own marriage was the biggest mistake of his life, and that he would rather give him money to visit a prostitute than to set out on a life of respectable matrimony which he cannot sustain financially on his own. In the second major scene, Otto and his beloved Hanna decide that the only option open to them is to commit suicide together. Before doing so, however, they resolve to spend what little money they have on an extravagant trip to the countryside, as if they were an affluent couple on their honeymoon. The rest of the text is devoted to describing this excursion, where they sleep

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<sup>42</sup> It is probably for this reason that Nabl later described the novella in the following terms: ‘Eine Novelle “Komödie” war für die damalige Zeit so kraß avantgardistisch, daß keine Redaktion sie zu bringen wagte.’ See MW, p. 80.

together for the first time, and its anti-climactic aftermath on the morning of their intended suicide.

Thematically, the text develops a number of issues already present in ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’ which recur, as we shall discover, in Nabl’s mature writing. For example, Nabl’s predilection for exploring issues of generational conflict, evident in the emotional damage inflicted on Martin Krist by his uncle Anton, returns here in the failure of Otto’s uncle to offer him a lifeline in the form of financial support, but also in his insensitive mocking of his nephew’s dreams and aspirations. In contrast to Martin Krist, however, Otto is able to formulate a conscious critique of his uncle’s values:

Und auf einmal empfand der junge Boldewin einen unabänderlichen Willen in sich. Den Willen, seinem Onkel die Maske vom Gesicht zu reißen, die er entweder schon früher getragen hatte, damals, als das Märchen seiner wunderbaren Liebe gesponnen wurde, oder die Maske, mit der er sich jetzt gegen ihn schützte.<sup>43</sup>

The wording of this passage is telling because it introduces one of the central terms in Nabl’s creative vocabulary, the notion of ‘Wille’. Nabl’s male characters are repeatedly dogged by internal conflicts arising, on the one hand, from their desire to freely exercise their will and the social expectation that they, as men, are strong enough to do so, and, on the other hand, their frequent failure. In this respect then, Otto Boldewin stands at the beginning of a long line of Nabl’s protagonists, some of which we will encounter in the

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<sup>43</sup> Franz Nabl, ‘Komödie’ in *Narrentanz* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1911), pp. 1-49 (p. 14). Henceforth cited in text as K with page numbers.

following sections of this chapter, such as Hans Jäckel and the narrator-protagonist of ‘Dokument’, Herr Daniel, and others, such as the Arlets, who will be treated later.

A further thematic connection between ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’ and ‘Komödie’ is the protagonists’ rigorous adherence to conventional moral precepts. Fulfilment for the couples in these texts, both romantically and sexually, is conceivable only within the safe, legitimate confines of a bourgeois marriage. Whereas stereotype males in fin-de-siècle literature, such as Schnitzler’s Anatol, care only whether their female companions are faithful to them, worrying little about their own fidelity, erotic relations come at a much higher emotional price for Nabl’s heroes, Martin Krist and Otto Boldewin. In fact, only suicide promises to allow these characters to escape the strictures imposed by the cultural code of morality and yield to their vital impulses. Sexual freedom, it seems, comes only at the price of death.

This underlying pattern, where passionate, erotic love is a social taboo so unacceptable as to demand sacrificial suicide from those who wish to experience it, also provides much of the tragic impact of Keller’s *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*.<sup>44</sup> However, this is not the only parallel. On closer inspection, the second half of Nabl’s ‘Komödie’ is essentially a variation of Sali and Vrenchen’s Sunday excursion on the eve of their joint suicide. Both sets of couples scrape together what little money they have so

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<sup>44</sup> Structuralizing literary historians postulate that this is a key element in the transition between the literary ‘systems’ of ‘Realism’ and ‘Modernism’. See Marianne Wunsch, ‘Vom späten “Realismus” zur “Frühen Moderne”’: Versuch eines Modells des literarischen Strukturwandels’ in *Modelle des literarischen Strukturwandels*, ed. by Michael Titzmann (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), pp. 187-205 (pp. 195-196). For a discussion of sacrifice in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* see Derek Hillard, ‘Violence, Ritual and Conformity: On Sacrifice in Keller’s *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* and Storm’s *Der Schimmelreiter*’, *Monatshefte*, 101 (2009), 361-381.

that they can escape to the countryside or, in the more limited geographical scope of Keller's novella of rural life, to the next village, and experience briefly the exhilaration of freedom from the demands of their ordinary social life.

In Nabl's text especially, this is essentially a journey of sensual self-discovery and, since it takes place in spring, obviously also a choice, if only fleeting, in favour of the emphatic form of 'Life', explored earlier in 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist':

Otto Boldewin hatte sich fest vorgenommen, mit keinem Gedanken an das Ende seiner Frühlingsfahrt zu denken. Er wollte das ganze so genießen, wie ein nie erhofftes, wunderbar schönes Abenteuer, das ihm ganz plötzlich in den Schoß gefallen war. Vielleicht war es eine Feigheit, [...] aber er wollte genießen, schrankenlos genießen wenigstens einmal in seinem Leben. (K, 29)

While Keller's Sali lacks the cynically sexual motivations evident in the above passage, there are still strong symbolic elements in his description of the lovers' excursion which allude to the confluence of sexuality and vitality. Strikingly, especially in light of attempts to distinguish neatly between the characteristics of realism and modernism, Sali, and above all, Vrenchen's naive sexuality is continually conveyed through references to dance, which, as we saw in the previous section, would become a leitmotif of eros and vitalism in fin-de-siècle literature. The very impetus for the trip derives from Vrenchen's erotically fuelled dream of dancing with Sali at their wedding: 'Es träumte mir, wir tanzten miteinander auf unserer Hochzeit, lange, lange Stunden! Und waren so glücklich, sauber geschmückt, und es fehlte uns an nichts. Da wollten wir uns endlich küssen und

dürsteten darnach, aber immer zog uns etwas auseinander'.<sup>45</sup> This dream outlines the basic tension of the novella, namely the conflict between individual desire and the realities of social life. Shortly afterwards, Vrenchen allows Sali to sell his watch exclaiming with a bitterly portentous irony: “denn ich glaube, ich müßte sterben, wenn ich nicht morgen mit Dir tanzen könnte” (KSW IV, 125). She will, of course, finally get to dance (and sleep) with Sali, but this will also be followed by their suicide.

It is important to recognize, though, that Sali and Vrenchen do, at least, have a choice in this matter, since this not only affects how Keller invites us to interpret the text, but forms a key point of departure from Nabl's 'Komödie'. When the couple actually dances together for the first time, they do so to music played by the mysterious dark fiddler ('der schwarze Geiger'), the rightful owner of the land over which Sali and Vrenchen's fathers had originally fallen out. This semi-mythical figure, whose outsider status and entourage of intoxicated, dancing youths strongly recall Dionysus and his satyrs, urges Sali and Vrenchen to join his band of followers and embark on a carefree, sexually liberated life in the woods:

Kommt mit mir und meinen guten Freunden in die Berge, da brauchet ihr keinen Pfarrer, kein Geld, keine Schriften, keine Ehre, kein Bett, nichts als Eueren guten Willen! Es ist gar nicht so übel bei uns, gesunde Luft und genug zu essen, wenn man thätig ist; die grünen Wälder sind unser Haus, wo wir uns liebhaben, wie es uns gefällt, und im Winter machen wir uns die wärmsten Schlupfwinkel oder kriechen den Bauern ins warme Heu. Also kurz entschlossen, haltet gleich hier Hochzeit und kommt mit uns, dann seid Ihr aller Sorgen los und habt Euch für immer und ewiglich, solange es Euch gefällt

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<sup>45</sup> See Gottfried Keller, *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by Walter Morgenthaler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 1996-), IV: *Die Leute von Seldwyla. Erster Band*, ed. by Peter Villwock and others, p. 124. Henceforth cited in text as KSW IV with page numbers.

wenigstens; denn alt werdet Ihr bei unserem freien Leben, das könnt Ihr glauben! (KSW IV, 151)<sup>46</sup>

Sexuality is, as this passage indicates, connected with nature and is a fundamental part of being human. To suppress one's sexual urges, the fiddler implies, is damaging to one's health, whereas sexual freedom guarantees a long life. While Sali is attracted to the possibilities promised by the fiddler ('Mich dünkt, es wäre nicht übel, die ganze Welt in den Wind zu schlagen und uns dafür zu lieben ohne Hindernis und Schranken', KSW IV, 151-152), Vrenchen is unable to accept the moral implications of the way of life practised by the fiddler and his companions.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, she answers Sali, arguing:

Nein, dahin möchte ich nicht gehen, denn da geht es nicht nach meinem Sinne zu. Der junge Mensch mit dem Waldhorn und das Mädchen mit dem seidenen Rocke gehören auch so zueinander und sollen sehr verliebt gewesen sein. Nun sei letzte Woche die Person ihm zum erstenmal untreu geworden, was ihm nicht in den Kopf wolle, und deshalb sei er so traurig und schmolle mit ihr und mit den anderen, die ihn auslachen. Sie aber thut eine mutwillige Buße, indem sie allein tanzt und mit Niemandem spricht, und lacht ihn nur aus damit. Dem armen Musikanten sieht man es jedoch an, daß er sich noch heute mit ihr versöhnen wird. Wo es aber so hergeht, möchte ich nicht sein, denn nie möcht' ich Dir untreu werden, wenn ich auch sonst noch alles ertragen würde, um Dich zu besitzen! (KSW IV, 152)

Just as in 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist', an emphatic form of life without restrictions is not only attractive but, as Vrenchen demonstrates, also dangerous because it threatens to undermine the moral code upon which the individual has based his life. The key difference between Keller's *Romeo und Julia* and Nabl's 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist'

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<sup>46</sup> On these and other Dionysian elements in Keller's text see also Hillard, p. 368. On the connection between the fiddler and the lovers' desire see also Robert C. Holub, 'Realism, Repetition, Repression: The Nature of Desire in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*', *MLN*, 100 (1985), 461-497 (pp. 492-496).

<sup>47</sup> The narrator also takes a negative view of the fiddler's entourage, describing them disparagingly as 'das eigentliche Hudelvölkchen'. See KSW IV, p. 147.

and 'Komödie' is that this code is scarcely criticized and, to a large extent, even reinforced by both the narrative perspective and the internal logic of the earlier work.

For example, Keller's narrator portrays Sali and Vrenchen as upholding the lost honour of their once respectable feuding families, noting:

Das Gefühl, in der bürgerlichen Welt nur in einer ganz ehrlichen und gewissenfreien Ehe glücklich sein zu können, war in ihm [Sali] ebenso lebendig wie in Vrenchen, und in beiden verlassenen Wesen war es die letzte Flamme der Ehre, die in früheren Zeiten in ihren Häusern geglüht hatte und welche die sich sicher fühlenden Väter durch einen unscheinbaren Mißgriff ausgeblasen und zerstört hatten, als sie, eben diese Ehre zu äufnen wähnend durch Vermehrung ihres Eigentums, so gedankenlos sich das Gut eines Verschollenen aneigneten, ganz gefahrlos, wie sie meinten. (KSW IV, 150)

The sins of the fathers are, thus, visited on their children, whose happiness is destroyed despite their obedience to the code of propriety the earlier generation have ignored. The code itself, however, remains intact and it is the moral fibre of Sali and Vrenchen which appeals to the reader's sympathies, even though the fictional public interprets their suicide as a sign of the moral bankruptcy of the times:

Es sei dies Ereignis vermutlich in Verbindung zu bringen mit einem Heuschiff aus jener Gegend, welches ohne Schifflente in der Stadt gelandet sei, und man nehme an, die jungen Leute haben das Schiff entwendet, um darauf ihre verzweifelte und gottverlassene Hochzeit zu halten, abermals ein Zeichen von der um sich greifenden Entsittlichung und Verwilderung der Leidenschaften. (KSW IV, 159)

In Nabl's 'Komödie', Otto and Hanna also indulge, like Sali and Vrenchen before them, in the pleasures of music and alcohol during their excursion to the countryside and they

too come into contact with other uninhibited young people, the modern equivalent of Keller's 'Hudelvölkchen', whose free, sexually liberated behaviour both characters envy:

Und sie [Hanna] ließ ihm [Otto] die linke Hand und mit der rechten hob sie das Glas. Sie wollte so lustig und glücklich sein, wie die anderen Frauen hier, und wie diese verachteten Mädchen. – Warum waren sie denn verachtet? Warum hatte man bei ihr daheim nur scheu und stockend und nur mit komisch verrenkten Ausdrücken gesprochen, wenn von solch einem Geschöpf die Rede war? Wer verachtete sie denn? Wer? – – – Die Männer schmeichelten ihnen ja,... (K, 35)

This passage reveals two significant differences between Nabl and the nineteenth-century realist Keller. Firstly, Nabl's later novella exploits the strikingly modern narrative technique of free indirect speech to render Hanna's thoughts in a manner reminiscent not only of Schnitzler's portrayal of Marie's psyche in *Sterben* but also of his representation of interiority in numerous other texts, such as *Frau Berta Garlan* (1900) and *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* (1913).<sup>48</sup> In the context of the received view of Nabl as an implicitly anachronistic opponent of modernism, this is striking in itself. More importantly, though, is the second difference, namely Hanna's response to the loose women around her. Rather than rejecting their immorality, she comes to question the validity of the accepted values she has grown up with. Her doubts are illustrated by her response, upon waking the next morning and having lost her virginity to Otto, only to find him pointing a revolver at her: 'Was? ... Otto! ... Es war ja so schön gestern abend! ... Komm! ... Komm wieder zu mir, wie gestern ...' (K, 45). In direct contrast to Keller's Vrenchen,

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<sup>48</sup> Schnitzler here is not meant as an exhaustive example of this narrative technique, but as a useful point of comparison in the context of fin-de-siècle Austrian literature.

Nabl's Hanna is quite able to accept her transgression of the bourgeois code of morality. In fact, it is only when Otto reminds her that she might be pregnant and, thus, not be able to hide her misdemeanour from society that she wishes to end her life. Even this, though, quickly descends into a farce because neither lover has the courage to go first and both lack the necessary trust in their partner to follow through with their side of the suicide pact afterwards:

“Ja? ... Geh du voran? ... Weißt du, ... ich kann es nicht sehen, daß du nach mir zielst, ... ich kann das nicht erwarten! ... Ich will die Augen zumachen ... und wenn du ... wenn du es getan hast ... dann halte ich mir den Lauf von hinten gegen den Kopf ... ich kann es nur nicht sehen, ... weißt du ...?” Otto Boldewin horchte auf. Ihre Worte trafen ihn wie Peitschenschläge! Sie dachte so wie er! (K, 46-47)

The darkly comic impact of all this, then, has a clear critical thrust absent from Keller's earlier text. Otto and Hanna's attempted suicide must, in the end, appear ridiculous because the romantic ideals which demand this from them if they are to live out their natural sexual desires are outdated. While Otto and Hanna do eventually escape with their lives, the text still constitutes both a serious warning and a critique of the potentially damaging effects of the prevailing code of sexual morality. Even prior to their failed suicide attempt, for example, Otto is shown to be suffering from signs of neurotic illness, prompting his physician uncle to exclaim: ‘Schauerlich! ... Ist das eine Jugend heutzutage! Ein Bursche von vierundzwanzig Jahren und hat Nerven wie ein hysterisches Frauenzimmer in klimakterischen Alter!’ (K, 9). Overall, then, far from being an anachronistic realist novella, Nabl's text is a decidedly modern narrative which explores

the limitations of contemporary conceptions of sexual morality, ultimately calling them into question.<sup>49</sup>

**‘Ich mag nicht mehr allein sein...’: Love, Loneliness and Lunacy in *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr***

Nabl’s preoccupation with the conflict between adolescent desire and the societal restrictions placed upon it, central to the novellas ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’ and ‘Komödie’, is treated in even greater depth in *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr*. This novel, Nabl’s first attempt at an extended work of prose fiction, focuses on the emotional development of a sensitive young student during his passage into adulthood. The text is divided into two books and begins with the protagonist Hans Jäckel’s journey back to Vienna from his country home for the start of a new academic year. This first book introduces the immature Jäckel’s lazy student life, spending evenings in the Prater and coffee houses along with his friend Moritz Ambros, a successful medical student and veteran of many a flirtatious affair. Moritz urges the painfully introspective Jäckel, who has suffered a series of nervous episodes involving feelings of inexplicable disorientation and alienation, to embrace his sexuality and enjoy the pleasures offered by the many available lower-class Viennese girls. After much soul-searching, Jäckel embarks on an

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<sup>49</sup> In treating the theme of neurosis resulting from the restrictions of the cultural code of morality, Nabl also enters territory explored most notably by Sigmund Freud. See especially Freud, ‘Die “kulturelle” Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität’ in Freud, *Studienausgabe*, ed. by Alexander Mitscherlich and others, 10 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1969-1975), IX: *Fragen der Gesellschaft. Ursprünge der Religion*, pp. 11-32. Further references to this edition are cited as FSA.

affair with a sensitive and frail 'süßes Mädel' called Fritzi Werndl, yet is left feeling unfulfilled and disgusted following its consummation. In the last chapter of Book I, an unhinged Hans confides in Ambros, telling him of his disappointment and indicating that he now believes that he can only quench his desires by compulsive promiscuity.

The second book begins with Hans's recovery from a period of nervous anxiety, during which we are led to believe that he has thrown himself blindly into the attractions of Vienna's bohemian nightlife, drinking excessively and sleeping with prostitutes. At the end of its opening chapter, Hans decides to pay a visit to his father's friend Herr Krick, whom Hans met along with his wife in Book I and whose invitation he received shortly afterwards. At a reception at the Krick family home, Hans meets their daughter Grete (a spitting image of her beautiful mother) and soon afterwards encounters her at a Wagner performance. We learn that the Krick family is dysfunctional, firstly from hearsay at the reception about Frau Krick's adultery, as well as from Hans's first impressions of their family life. This information is later confirmed by the drunken outpourings of Herr Krick about the frustrations of his sex life and by Hans's mother's opinions of Frau Krick. In the following chapter, Hans returns home for Christmas in a reversal of the opening scene. In the country he initially manages to distance himself from his immoral behaviour in the city and starts to feel revitalized. However, his enthusiasm for the provinces is soon dampened by the tense sobriety of his family Christmas celebrations, which make him glad to return to Vienna. Here he renews his visits to the Kricks, begins to court Grete, learns of her deep unhappiness at the tasteless immorality and lack of affection in her family and becomes engaged to her. After the engagement, Hans devotes himself

wholeheartedly to his studies, at Grete's bidding, in order to finish university so that they can marry.

During this time Hans only visits Grete at home and they stop going for walks alone. Initially, this goes well, but when spring arrives Hans longs to see her and they agree to go on walks together again. During their first outing, they rent a rowing boat and row out to a secluded island in the Danube, where Hans is overcome with sexual desire and attempts to seduce Grete. She pushes him away and writes Hans a letter expressly forbidding him to see her alone until they marry, since she fears that pre-marital sex would tarnish the sanctity of their relationship. Possessed with animal desire, Hans is not to be stopped by the letter and subsequently goes to the Kricks to see Grete, once more attempting to seduce her. Following another rebuff, Hans in a fit of passion attempts to seduce her mother, and the experienced adulteress takes pleasure in his weakness and instructs him to wait.

In the final chapter, it is spring, yet wintry weather symbolically returns as Hans remains at home brooding over the events of the past year, and receiving visits from Grete's mother for sex. This is only interrupted by the sudden death of Hans's father, which forces him to return home for the funeral, once more reversing the situation at the outset of the text. Owing to his cool relationship with his father, Hans is hardly moved by his father's funeral, but on encountering Herr Krick, he decides to leave before the ceremony begins. The text ends with a letter from Hans to Grete telling her that they will probably never see each other again, and revealing his affair with her mother. The letter also contains the psychologically unhinged Hans's incoherent philosophical musings on

the unhappiness of human life, and ends with the solipsistic insight that man must find the means to sustain himself from within, which he expresses by reference to a symbolic ‘goldene Säule in der Brust’, upon which he intends to rely in the future, even if society views him as insane.

This detailed outline of the plot demonstrates obvious parallels between Nabl’s first novel and the story ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’.<sup>50</sup> Not only are both protagonists intensely shy law students from provincial backgrounds, but more importantly both texts share a clear focus on relating their protagonists’ first experiences of love and sexuality. Moreover, just as Martin Krist’s relationship with Marianne functioned both as an escape from the loneliness of the characters’ respective childhoods, and a defensive alliance against the perils of the outside world, Hans Jäckel’s relationships with both Fritzi and Grete Krick are similarly characterized by attempts to isolate themselves from others, forming a self-sufficient cocoon which shuts out the vulgar influences of social life. This is well illustrated by the scene where Hans first invites Fritzi to his apartment in Vienna. By this point in the text, we have already learned that Hans has specifically moved apartments to enable him to entertain Fritzi, something which his previous landlady would not have permitted. However, instead of the expected sexual motives for this decision, he only wants to be alone with Fritzi, at least consciously, in order to avoid the glances and likely aspersions cast on their relationship by bystanders when they meet in public:

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<sup>50</sup> This substantial account of the novel’s plot is necessary because of both the work’s limited availability and unfamiliarity even to scholars working on the period.

Wenn er mit Fritzi nach dem Abendessen ein Restaurant verließ, dann sah er förmlich allen Menschen die Gedanken aus den Augen kriechen. Häßliche Gedanken, die sie beide nach Hause begleiteten und dann mit ihnen spielten, lüstern und schamlos. Und das konnte er nicht ertragen. Er wollte mit Fritzi allein sein in einem Raum, den niemand betreten durfte, niemand sehen.<sup>51</sup>

Hans's noble intentions stand in stark contrast to the portrayal of the directly sexual motives usually associated with men involved in similar relationships in early twentieth-century Austrian literature, most notably by Schnitzler. For example, in his novella *Frau Berta Garlan*, the heroine Berta visits an old flame, Emil, in Vienna and is taken first to a chambre séparée at a restaurant, and subsequently to a tastelessly furnished room complete with a lewd portrait of a naked woman, rented specially for the purpose of keeping his amorous adventures hidden from polite society.<sup>52</sup> Unlike the cool and erotically forthright Emil, who quickly plies Berta with champagne before suggesting they retire to his apartment, Hans Jäckel is only interested in enjoying a scene of cosy domesticity. Indeed, on the way home from the shops ('Unterwegs kauften sie noch kalte Eßwaren ein, daheim wollten sie sich dann Tee dazu kochen', HJ, 66-67), he revels in Fritzi's explanations of how she will arrange all the food they have just bought neatly on the plate, and the narrator informs us:

Er [Hans] empfand seit seinen Kinderjahren vielleicht wieder zum ersten Male, was es heißt, daheim zu sein. Und nun kam ihm seine Mietswohnung nicht mehr so kalt und unfreundlich vor, denn er sah das Mädchen, wie es sich mit gestrecktem Körper auf die

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<sup>51</sup> *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1908), p. 66. Henceforth cited in text as HJ with page numbers.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. SES I, pp. 472-473.

Fußspitzen stellte, um die Lampe anzuzünden, wie es dann geschäftig den Tisch deckte und schließlich an seiner Seite saß und jeden Bissen mit ihm teilte. (HJ, 67)

However, the importance of the connection between love and security, emphasized by the semantics of the word ‘daheim’, which occurs here twice in quick succession, actually provides a point of comparison with *Frau Berta Garlan*, since Berta also links the experience of being alone with Emil to the feeling of being at home:

Emil hat sich einen Stuhl neben den ihren gerückt. Er zieht sie an sich und küßt sie, während ihre Finger immer weiter spielen und endlich ruhig auf den Tasten liegen bleiben. Berta hört, wie der Regen an die Fensterscheiben schlägt, und ein Gefühl von Zuhausesein kommt über sie. (SES I, 473-474)

Of course, at first sight, the fact that Berta feels at home in the midst of Emil’s erotic advances seemingly distances the text from Nabl’s. However, when seen in the context of Schnitzler’s narrative strategy of presenting uncritically Berta’s thoughts and feelings through the extensive use of narrated monologue, and undermining them by contrast with the events of the story, we realize that her feelings of ‘Zuhausesein’ are merely a projection of inner desire onto an incongruently prosaic reality. Berta is, thus, so desperate to realize the ideal form of love which she has fantasized about for so long that she is somehow able to ignore that Emil is merely exploiting her for sex in a seedy dive.

While Nabl’s narrative lacks this cynically ironic dimension, Hans’s idealistic conception of love surprisingly overlaps with Berta’s in an unusual reversal of gender stereotypes. In fact, Nabl’s treatment of the early stages of Hans’s relationship with Fritzi reads like a revision of Schnitzler’s various depictions of young men’s treatment of

Vienna's archetypal 'süße Mädeln'.<sup>53</sup> For example, Hans makes no attempt to maintain a distance between his personal life and his affair with Fritzi, and they not only spend their first evening alone together looking at a photograph album containing pictures of Hans's home and his parents, but the protagonist even sketches a plan of the country estate where he grew up. This is taken even further on Fritzi's third visit to Hans's apartment, where the protagonist tells her:

Ich mag nicht mehr allein sein, Fritzel. Du mußt bei mir bleiben ... Wenn ich nach Hause komm, dann muß ich wissen, daß du im Zimmer sitzt und auf mich wartest. ... Ich will einmal sagen können: ich geh nach Haus. ... Verstehst du das, Fritzel? ... Oh du, das ist schön. Zu Haus! ... Wenn man das so sagen kann! ... Bis jetzt hab ich es noch nicht können. (HJ, 107)

This passage indicates beyond any doubt how Hans's romantic relationships are governed by the desire to create stability in an outside world perceived as increasingly hostile and devoid of ethical values, and consistently associated with the notion of being at home.<sup>54</sup> Given the tendency to associate Nabl with the *Heimatroman*, it is worth stressing, however, that the notion of stability and *Heimat* expressed by Hans in this section has nothing to do with generational ties to the land, or to a particular geographical region. Instead, the definition of 'home' which Hans proceeds to outline more evidently imitates

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<sup>53</sup> For example cf. 'Weihnachtseinkäufe' in *Anatol* [1888-91] in Arthur Schnitzler, *Gesammelte Werke. Die Dramatischen Werke*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1962), I, pp. 41-50 and *Reigen* [1900] in *ibid.*, pp. 354-371. Henceforth cited in text as SDW I with page numbers. For autobiographical models see Arthur Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien. Eine Autobiographie*, ed. by Therese Nickl and Heinrich Schnitzler (Vienna: Molden, 1968), esp. on his relationship with Jeannette Heger, pp. 281-284.

<sup>54</sup> See also HJ, p. 209: 'Er dachte manches Mal, ob es wohl eine Zeit geben würde, in der er immer mit Grete Krick beisammen sein konnte, immer bei Tag und bei Nacht. Da kam ihm nach jener Zeit, ein Heimweh nach einer ungekannten Heimat.'

an ideal of cosy domesticity stemming from the Biedermeier period, and appears unusually cosmopolitan when compared to the rhetoric of the German *Heimatkunst* movement, and its Austrian variant *Provinzkunst*:

Das muß nicht immer dort sein, wo man Vater und Mutter hat, Fritzel! ... Zu Hause sein kann man auch irgendwo ganz in der Fremde. Wo man nicht geboren ist ... wo man keine Verwandten hat. Ich glaub, zu Haus ist man dort, wo Menschen sind, die einen lieb haben ... die man selber lieb hat. Oder dort, wo man einmal etwas Wunderschönes erlebt hat. (HJ, 107)<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, in characteristic fashion for Nabl's early fiction, the sentimentality of this passage is soon undermined by the disillusionment which results from Hans's subsequent consummation of his relationship with Fritzi. Rather than experiencing a harmonious union which elevates their relationship to new heights, Hans is left distraught by the disappointment of his first sexual encounter. Instead of creating a new emotional *Heimat* to share with his lover, sex actually results in feelings of alienation and disgust so strong that Hans becomes not only withdrawn but eventually completely disorientated. This starts to become apparent in the scene directly following Hans's first sexual encounter with Fritzi, where Hans visits Moritz and stares emptily into space while his friend plays a melancholy folk song on the piano, and is reinforced when they run into each other on the street some time later and the agitated Hans tells him:

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<sup>55</sup> On Austrian *Provinzkunst* see Karlheinz Rossbacher, 'Provinzkunst: A Countermovement to Viennese Culture' in *Focus on Vienna 1900: Change and Continuity in Literature, Music, Art and Intellectual History*, ed. by Erika Nielsen (Munich: Fink, 1982), pp. 23-31. See Chapter 4 below for a more detailed analysis of Nabl's treatment of the theme of *Heimat*.

Es gibt nur eine Liebe, die wirklich genügt. Ein Weib genießen und dabei schon ein anderes begehren. [...] Du darfst nicht sagen, ich habe genossen! Du darfst nur sagen ich genieße und werde genießen! Sonst stirbt der Genuß ... und du hast nur den Ekel! (HJ, 110)

The degree of alienation felt by Nabl's protagonist after sleeping with Fritzi, which even precipitates a nervous breakdown, is unusually overwhelming. Yet Hans's basic response to his first sexual experience, especially the ambivalent mixture of irresistible temptation and deep-seated disgust that results from it, is interestingly also echoed by Kafka's description, in a letter to Milena Jesenská, of losing his virginity to a willing shop-assistant in a hotel room:

Das alles war, schon vor dem Hotel, reizend, aufregend und abscheulich, im Hotel war es nicht anders. Und als wir dann gegen Morgen, es war immer noch heiß und schön, über die Karlsbrücke nachhause giengen, war ich allerdings glücklich, aber dieses Glück bestand nur darin, daß das Ganze nicht noch abscheulicher, nicht noch schmutziger gewesen war. [...] Und so wie es damals war, blieb es immer. Mein Körper, oft jahrelang still, wurde dann wieder geschüttelt bis zum Nicht-ertragen-können von dieser Sehnsucht nach einer kleinen, nach einer ganz bestimmten Abscheulichkeit, nach etwas leicht Widerlichem, Peinlichem, Schmutzigen, noch in dem Besten, was es hier für mich gab, war etwas davon, irgendein kleiner schlechter Geruch, etwas Schwefel, etwas Hölle. Dieser Trieb hatte etwas vom ewigen Juden, sinnlos gezogen, sinnlos wandernd durch eine sinnlos schmutzige Welt.<sup>56</sup>

It is striking how closely the feelings outlined by Kafka here apply to Hans Jäckel's sexual behaviour in the course of Nabl's novel, which is structured around periods of apparent harmony and commitment to bourgeois values of domesticity and propriety, and outbursts of sexual urgency which drive the protagonist to actively seek out woman after

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<sup>56</sup> Franz Kafka, *Briefe an Milena. Erweiterte Neuauflage*, ed. by Jürgen Born and Michael Müller (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983), pp. 197-198.

woman, satisfying an essentially empty and meaningless animalistic drive. The similarities revealed here suggest that Nabl's novel, rather than presenting an anachronistic treatment of sexuality, incompatible with the candour in erotic matters evident in modernist writing, actually conveys a valid ambivalence regarding the moral legitimacy of sexual experience evidently still common among sensitive young bourgeois men in the period. In addition, when considered against the backdrop of Nabl's denigration as a trivial regional author, such a provocative comparison with a writer of Kafka's standing is, in itself, valuable in bringing out the complexities of Nabl's relationship to the contemporary literary context.

Moreover, Nabl's portrayal of the neurosis which results especially from Hans's inability to resolve the psychological conflict between his erotic desire and his internalized code of morality not only recalls 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' but, more importantly, takes up one of the dominant themes of fin-de-siècle Viennese intellectual life. For example, in the important treatise 'Die "kulturelle" Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität', published in the same year as Nabl's debut novel, Freud locates the origins of widespread neurosis in turn-of-the-century European society in the restrictive dictates of bourgeois morality. According to his argument, this has particularly acute effects on women who allegedly internalize the cultural restrictions on their sexuality to such an extent that they are often frigid in the early years of their marriage, ruining their relationship with their husbands by the time they reach sexual maturity and leaving them

only with a choice between unfulfilled longing, adultery or neurosis.<sup>57</sup> While this contention itself rests on a rather dubious generalization about the apparent sexual coolness of bourgeois marriages, it is remarkable that the Krick family in Nabl's novel broadly conforms to this pattern. Grete consistently rejects Hans's pre-marital sexual advances, and her mother and father are erotically and emotionally estranged, with Herr Krick satisfying his sexual needs by seeking out prostitutes and enjoying erotic literature and drawings (HJ, 189) and Frau Krick a notorious adulteress.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Nabl's portrayal of Hans's neurosis does more than merely reflect the shared cultural situation which formed the background for Freud's psychoanalytical theories. Rather Nabl sets out to explore the personal cost deriving from the incompatibility of nineteenth-century ideals of domestic happiness and erotic fulfilment. In doing so, Nabl produces a characteristically modern treatment of the theme of insanity, which breaks with the conventions of nineteenth-century realist narrative.<sup>59</sup>

While later realist writers, such as Ferdinand von Saar, had begun to engage with neurosis and other forms of psychopathology in their literary texts, such themes were almost unanimously approached through either the lens of a normal first-person narrator figure on whose authority the abnormal status of the character under scrutiny was clearly

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<sup>57</sup> See FSA IX, pp. 11-32 (pp. 26-27).

<sup>58</sup> The classic literary treatment of the sexual hypocrisies described by Freud here is, of course, Schnitzler's *Reigen*. Cf. esp. scene V 'Die junge Frau und der Ehemann', SDW I, 347-353.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Wünsch, pp. 190-191.

identified, or via a frame-narrative serving similar purposes.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, Nabl's text largely relinquishes such distancing strategies, and tends to depict Hans's nervous episodes from a figural narrative perspective verging occasionally on narrated monologue, as indicated by the insertion of suspension points into the seemingly neutral narrative report:

Mit einem Male überkam ihn aber ein ganz seltsames, unbekanntes Weh. Angstvoll blickte er um sich, und das helle, freundliche Bild, das ihm von frühester Jugend an so vertraut gewesen war, erschien ihm plötzlich fremd und neu. Er kannte die Haselstauden, unter denen er saß, und doch war ihm zumute, als hätte er sie noch nie in seinem Leben gesehen. Und die hohen Tannen, die moosigen Felssteine, die aus dem Walde hervorlugten, ... das alles starrte ihn fremd und drohend an. Da erfüllte ihn ein namenloses Bangen. Er sprang auf und lief so schnell er konnte, nach Hause. Und dabei starrte er geradeaus in die Luft hinein. Er hatte Angst, irgend etwas anzusehen. Vorbei an all den wohlbekanntem Plätzen ... an den Gehöften und Scheunen ... er wollte sie nicht sehen, er fürchtete sich vor ihrem fremden, starren Anblick. (HJ, 22)<sup>61</sup>

Given the frequent insistence on Nabl's affinities to the *Heimatroman*, it is particularly striking that this passage places Hans's first disorientating anxiety attack in the midst of an idyllic countryside scene near to his home, rather than depicting it, as might perhaps

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<sup>60</sup> See Ferdinand von Saar, *Leutnant Burda* (1887) and *Der Brauer von Habrovan* (1901). The former utilizes a straightforward first-person narrator, the latter is a double frame-narrative with three different narrators. On *Leutnant Burda* see also Regina Fasold, 'Ferdinand von Saars Novelle *Leutnant Burda* im Kreuzungspunkt des Diskurses über Traum, Wahn, Sexualität und Dichtung 1885/1887 in Wien' in *Literarisches Leben in Österreich 1848-1890*, ed. by Klaus Amann and others (Vienna: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 690-704.

<sup>61</sup> My use of the term 'figural narrative perspective' is adapted from the narrative theory of Franz Stanzel. See Stanzel, *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman: dargestellt an 'Tom Jones', 'Moby Dick', 'The Ambassadors', 'Ulysses' u.a.* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1955), pp. 93-97 and *Typische Formen des Romans* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 39-52. Stanzel identifies the use of narrated monologue as an important feature in the transition from authorial ('auktorial') to figural ('personal') narrative situations in *Theorie des Erzählens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), pp. 247-248.

be expected, in response to the protagonist's experience of city life.<sup>62</sup> However, what motivates Nabl's decision to do this?

The answer to this question appears to be twofold. Firstly, as we have already indicated, the writer is far more interested in exploring the psychological torment produced by the clash of strict moral values and man's animalistic nature, than in propagating the anti-urban values of the *Heimatkunst* movement. Secondly, and more importantly, Nabl chooses to stage Hans's first neurotic episode near to his rural home and the location of his childhood, in order to emphasize that the protagonist has already reached a stage of inner development where he must break with his youth and enter into manhood before he moves to Vienna to study. This explains why Hans's feelings of alienation are characterized not by the experience of extreme difference, but rather by a sense of exhausted possibilities: 'Ich kenne eine Gegend ... ein Buch ... eine Person ... und auf einmal wird mir alles fremd ... und dabei doch nicht neu. [...] Aber nicht fremd, wie etwas, das ich noch nicht kenne, sondern fremd, wie etwas, das ich ausgeschöpft habe, das mir nichts mehr geben kann!' (HJ, 102). Thus Hans's first nervous episode can be considered a heightened emotional response to the passing of his childhood, in line with the opening scenes of the novel, where Nabl employs narrated monologue to describe how Hans revisits all of his favourite places whenever he returns home, re-enacting a series of formerly beloved rituals, which nowadays soon lose their once inexhaustible appeal:

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<sup>62</sup> See Chapter 4 below for an extended discussion of nineteenth-century sociological and literary discourse on the town/country divide.

So wiederholte Hans Jäckel jedesmal, wenn er in den Ferien die Heimstatt seiner Kindheit besuchte, all das, was er als Kind getan hatte. Aber damals konnte er es jeden Tag tun, und jeden Tag machte es ihm neue Freude ... Jetzt wurde er des Spieles bald müde und ließ schon nach wenigen Tagen davon ab. Freilich war er ja indessen viel älter geworden ... (HJ, 5)

Problematically, although Hans recognizes that he has become too old for childish games, he still finds it impossible to sever ties to his childhood in the course of the text. Indeed, his tendency to associate romantic relationships with the notion of *Heimat* outlined earlier in our analysis, is in fact subconsciously motivated by the desire to recreate the security of his childhood. It is for this reason that Hans tells both Fritzi and later Grete about his childhood hiding places:

Sie sollten einmal im Sommer mit mir draußen sein! ... Dann möchte ich Sie überall hinführen, wo ich sonst nur ganz heimlich und allein herumgekrochen bin. Auf den Boden zu den Fledermäusen ... in den Keller zur Quelle ... und in den Garten, wo die Radieschenbeete sind! In den Wald ... zu allen den kleinen Wiesen und Buschwinkeln! Sehen Sie, das alles hab ich mir bewahrt. Dort durfte mir keiner hinkommen ... sonst hätte es mir nicht mehr gefallen, glaub ich ... (HJ, 196)<sup>63</sup>

It is particularly revealing that all of these cherished places are characterized by solitude and isolation from others, which the protagonist has kept emotionally enshrined and now wishes to share with his lover. This recalls Martin and Marianne's oath in 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' which has a similar symbolic function, in forming a metaphorical

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<sup>63</sup> Compare this quotation with the earlier passage where Hans relives the so-called 'jüngste[r] Tag seiner Kindheit' (HJ, 3-5), and shortly afterwards where he describes exactly the same places to Fritzi: 'Und Hans Jäckel mußte ihr alles ganz genau zeigen. Die Fenster seines Zimmers, die Tür, durch die er immer in den Garten kam, und die Bodenlücke, bei der er als Bub die Fledermäuse herausgelassen hatte ... und dann seine Lieblingswinkel im Garten und auch die Gemüsebeete mit den Kohlrüben und Radieschen' (HJ, 72).

boundary between the lovers and the outside world, based on the absolute value of their loyalty to one another. However, just as in the earlier story the oath's protective purpose was thwarted by the irresistible dictates of Martin's vitalism, Hans's chaste intentions are equally blighted by the natural force of his vigorous sexuality.

This is well demonstrated by the scene where Hans first attempts to seduce Grete Krick during a boat trip on the Danube, which symbolically depicts the reawakening of the protagonist's vigour and youth in the spring following a winter of intensive study towards his doctorate. This is announced by the name of the boat the couple rent, 'Iduna', the Nordic goddess associated with eternal youth, and further underlined by the narrator's comment: 'Und die Sonne strahlte warm und frühlingsscharf, als wollte sie sich in das Innerste aller Wesen eingraben und die heimlichsten Gefühle und Triebe aufwecken, zu Leben und Kraft' (HJ, 255).<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the fact that this re-emergence of natural vitality occurs out on the river is no coincidence, since water was frequently connected to the artistic and literary portrayal of forbidden sexuality at the turn of the nineteenth century, almost assuming the status of a collective symbol in the period.<sup>65</sup> As Hans watches Grete rowing, he is overcome by an eruption of erotic desire, linked here, just as in 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist', to a notion of 'Life' conceived as a dominant inner force:

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<sup>64</sup> See John Lindow, *A Handbook of Norse Mythology* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-Clio, 2001), pp. 198-199.

<sup>65</sup> Notable earlier examples of this in German literature include Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) and the end of Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*. Turn-of-the-century texts which feature a network of associations between water and vitality include Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* and later Schnitzler's *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* (1913). On the latter see also Michael Titzmann, 'Normenkrise und Psychologie in der Frühen Moderne. Zur Interpretation von Arthur Schnitzlers *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn*' in *Recherches Germaniques*, 28 (1998), 97-112 (pp. 103-104). On water and sexuality in fin-de-siècle art see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity. Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Ihre Wangen flammten wie ein leuchtender Sonnenaufgang, ihre feuchten Lippen waren halbgeöffnet, und aus den Augen rief es ihn an, kraftvoll und übermutig wie die Herausforderung des Lebens. Leben oder Sterben. Jedes ganz, aber keines halb. Da warf Hans Jäckel seinen Oberkörper vor, daß der Kahn ins Wanken kam, und schrie jauchzend auf. "Fahr zu ... fahr zu! ..." Und er starrte sie an, mit heißen, ungeheurn Blicken. (HJ, 255)

The dominance of natural imagery and the confluence of sexuality with vitality in this scene betray the influence of popular Nietzschean and Darwinist discourse on the novel, which is further underlined by the vocabulary of Hans's thoughts shortly before the boat trip:

Er fühlte, daß es das Schönste war, frei und unbekümmert um alle anderen seine Zukunft zu leben. [...] [Er] fühlte, daß es ein Kampf ums Leben war und daß er den letzten Rest der Zufriedenheit und des Glückes aus sich selbst heraus holen mußte. (HJ, 249)

Nevertheless, while Nabl obviously draws on the biologicistic rhetoric of popular Darwinism here, which also surfaces in the opinions on sexuality formulated by the medical student Moritz Ambros earlier in the novel, the actual events of the text demonstrate that the acceptance of materialist ideology is far from unproblematic for the individual.<sup>66</sup> For example, Moritz may be happy to dismiss Hans's moral reservations at the sexual exploitation of Vienna's lower-class 'süße Mädels', responding to the hero's unease at viewing man as nothing but an animal: 'In dem Augenblick, dem wir uns auf kunstvoll verschlungenen Wegen nähern, sind wir doch nur das, als was wir unter die

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<sup>66</sup> That Moritz Ambros, a Viennese medical student, should espouse Darwinist views is unsurprising, given the influence of prominent Darwinists at the University of Vienna during the period. See Werner Michler, *Darwinismus und Literatur. Naturwissenschaftliche und literarische Intelligenz in Österreich 1859-1914* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999), p. 74.

Lebewesen eingeteilt sind. Ein Säugetier' (HJ, 84). Yet shortly afterwards, the medical student unwittingly reveals this to be no more than Darwinist bravado, by getting drunk and pouring out his disillusionment with superficial liaisons with women he scarcely knows: 'Unsereins muß sich mit Frauenzimmern abgeben, mit denen man gleich per du ist. In der Nacht packt man sie auf der Straße zusammen, wie das liebe Vieh ... und wenn man weggeht, weiß man nicht einmal, wie sie ausgesehen haben!' (HJ, 98). Moreover, while Moritz manages to resolve his unhappiness by entering into a serious relationship with Hans's old girlfriend Fritzzi, Hans is eventually tormented to the point of lunacy by the conflict between his animalistic desires and his lofty ideals. Unable to suppress his lust, he starts to sleep with Grete's cynical adulteress mother in a misguided attempt to protect his fiancée from the impurity of his erotic needs, leaving him to lament in a section of interior monologue:

Warum sättigt man sich, wenn man hungert? Warum löscht man die Glut der Kehle, wenn man dürstet? Hunger und Durst sind die schönsten Gefühle. Aber wenn man ißt und trinkt, dann dünkt einem das Stillen das Schönste zu sein. Erst wenn Speise und Trank einem widerstehen, sieht man, was man verloren hat. Lieber Hungers sterben, als den Hunger stillen. Wenn man nicht Tier wäre! (HJ, 276)

Furthermore, at the end of the novel, a now fully deranged Hans writes to Grete, hurtfully revealing his affair with her mother and once more taking up the biologicistic rhetoric of hunger in an attempt to explain his actions:

Ich war hungrig nach deinem Körper, und mein Hunger hat alle anderen Gefühle erstickt. Nun habe ich ihn gestillt. Denn wenn ich deine Mutter geküßt und umarmt habe, waren

meine Augen geschlossen und meine ganze Gier strömte aus über dich. Dich habe ich geküßt und du hast in meiner Umarmung gezittert. Und doch bist du nicht beschmutzt worden. Ich habe keinen Hunger mehr ... (HJ, 288)

Overall, the contents of the letter reproduce the same basic situation as the end of ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’. Both Martin’s encounter with the prostitute and Hans’s affair with Grete’s mother are cathartic, defusing the urgency of the protagonist’s libidinal drives. However, whilst Martin Krist returns to the outdated moral system of guilt and penance, afterwards proceeding to commit suicide, *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr* concludes with Hans intending to roam the world, searching for new experiences, until such a time when he can regress to his childhood, relying on a metaphorical golden pillar within for support.<sup>67</sup> This fantasy of self-sufficiency is a desperate response to the total failure of Hans’s attempts to cocoon himself in the home, which govern the early stages of his relationships with both Fritzi and Grete in the novel. Indeed, since Hans only arrives at this narcissistic position through a descent into madness, the text’s ending actually suggests that these ideals of domesticity are really pathological, just as the conclusion of ‘Der Schwur des Martin Krist’ shows the uncle’s outdated values to be deathly. Moreover, by ending with a letter which sheds light directly on the protagonist’s delusions, the novel withholds a rationally satisfying conclusion from the reader, replacing it with an unmediated depiction of lunacy which departs from the traditions of realist narrative.

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<sup>67</sup> See HJ, pp. 288-289: ‘Ich trage eine goldene Säule in der Brust, die klingt und leuchtet. Und wenn ich müde bin, will ich mich anlehnen an sie.’

### **Notebooks of a Madman: Obsession, Insanity and Murder in Nabl's 'Dokument'**

Nabl returns once again to this fascination with the portrayal of madness in his next work, the novella 'Dokument'.<sup>68</sup> However, this text no longer deals with the mental decline of a protagonist arising directly from failed romantic relationships, or the disillusionment caused by the clash of stringent moral principles and the urgency of the libido. Instead, the author sets out to explore the psychology of a first-person narrator-protagonist, who exhibits extreme pathological traits from the outset, choosing a subject matter and fragmented notebook form reminiscent of Guy de Maupassant's short story *Le Horla* (1887). In the first paragraph, the reader learns that the narrator has just moved from the city to the countryside in order to reduce his contact with other people to a bare minimum:

Ich habe aufgehört, mit den Menschen anders zu verkehren, als wie es das tägliche Leben, das heißt, die täglichen Bedürfnisse meines Lebens verlangen. Ich habe schon Zeit genug verloren mit den überflüssigsten und nutzlosesten Gesprächen, und ich habe mir angewöhnt, nur so viel zu sagen, als notwendig ist, um nicht zu verhungern und auch sonst ein menschliches Dasein zu führen. (FE, 90)

This opening statement introduces a radical variation on the theme of retreat from society, which recurs not only in Nabl's work, but in the Austrian tradition of realist fiction as a whole, ranging from Adalbert Stifter's 'Kalkstein' in *Bunte Steine* (1853) and *Der Nachsommer* to the *Heimat* novels of Peter Rosegger. However, in 'Dokument' the

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<sup>68</sup> The text was written in 1908, and first published in March 1911 in the journal *Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte*, and then later that year in the revealingly entitled collection *Narrentanz*.

tone of the narrator-protagonist's oddly dispassionate rejection of human company not only marks a decisive break with these realist antecedents, but also immediately alerts the reader to his eccentricity, and thus potential unreliability. This is further underlined by the narrator's strange notion that he will live longer than other people by not wasting time with trivial conversations: 'Nach einer beiläufigen Berechnung habe ich herausgefunden, daß man auf diese Weise ungefähr fünf Tagesstunden gewinnt [...] Ich werde also in einem Jahr genau zweiundsiebzig Tage länger gelebt haben als die anderen Menschen' (FE, 90). Even though this is meant metaphorically, the extreme oddity of the idea firmly distances the reader from the narrator right from the beginning of the text. In doing so, Nabl betrays a tentative proximity to modernist fiction, which is further underlined by the narrator's subsequent reflections on the impossibility of authentically revealing the inner self:

Nie aber wird ein Mensch von dem, was er sein eigenstes Selbst nennt, den Schleier nehmen, auch dann nicht, wenn er es fest und vorsätzlich will. Und zwar wird keine Scheu, kein Zurückbeben ihn davon abhalten, sondern es wird das, was er eben noch klar und deutlich vor sich gesehen hat, in dem Augenblick, wo er die Hände ausstreckt, um es aus sich herauszuheben, verschwimmen, und er wird ins Leere greifen. (FE, 91)

The imagery of this passage recalls Maurice Maeterlinck's evocation of the ineffability of our most personal thoughts and feelings in *Le Trésor des Humbles* (1896), quoted by Robert Musil at the beginning of *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (1906), and echoes, albeit more distantly, the sentiments of the most famous document of fin-de-

siècle language scepticism, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Ein Brief* (1902).<sup>69</sup> However, the consequences which Nabl's narrator draws from this insight diverge from those of Hofmannsthal's Chandos, who conquers a crisis of language by experiencing the unity of life, and rendering this in the poetic form of the letter itself. In contrast, the narrator in 'Dokument' is less concerned with linguistic expression than with the inability of the individual to perceive himself objectively, and thus understand the motives for his own actions. For this reason, he resigns himself with extreme psychopathological consequences to a fundamental alienation from and mistrust of other people, whose 'erborgte und gespielte Äußerlichkeit' (FE, 91-92) is all we can ever know, thereby making loneliness a necessary and unavoidable condition of human existence.

One of the most prominent aspects of the narrator's pathological personality is his tendency to glorify acts of power and will, which verges on a blatant and uncritical adherence to social Darwinism. This is first announced when he comments on his decision to move to the countryside, noting that he was probably acting on a whim, just like all people whose existence is not completely enslaved by the struggle for life: 'wie ja alle Menschen, die nicht vollständig vom Kampf um ihr Leben unterjocht sind, das Meiste aus Laune tun' (FE, 94). This returns again in more pernicious form in his later comments on the cultural status of murder:

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Robert Musil, *Gesammelte Werke in neun Bänden*, ed. by Adolf Frisé (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981), VI: *Prosa und Stücke*, p. 7 and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden*, ed. by Bernd Schoeller, 10 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1979), VII: *Erzählungen, Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen*, pp. 461-472 (p. 465).

Wenn ich an den Auftritt des Schloßverwalters mit dem kleinen Kind zurückdenke, dann weiß ich, daß ich einen Menschen ermorden wollte. Es hat mir nur eine Waffe gefehlt. [...] Das ist so gut, als wenn ich den Mord schon begangen hätte. Das weiß ich, und ich bin ganz ruhig dabei. [...] Denn der Mord ist das natürlichste aller Dinge. Er ist Hilfe und Befreiung. Aber die Menschen haben ihn seit Jahrhunderten verboten und verfolgt, und darum ist er ein Verbrechen, ist häßlich. Hätte man den Mord nicht auf die Liste der tierischen Scheußlichkeiten gesetzt, dann würde weniger gemordet werden, aber edler und schöner. Der Mord würde dann die letzte und herrlichste Äußerung menschlicher Kraft und Würde sein. (FE, 113-114)

Of course, the narrator's glorification of murder, and his inability to differentiate between the desire to kill someone and the ugly reality of the act betrayed here is an obvious hallmark of the narrator's incipient lunacy, which distances the reader even further. Yet it also reveals a close affinity to the broader preoccupation in German modernism with violent death, notably traced by Ritchie Robertson.<sup>70</sup> Robertson discusses a large body of texts ranging chronologically from the 'Urfassung' of Wedekind's *Büchse der Pandora* (1894) to Heimito von Doderer's *Ein Mord den jeder begeht* (1938), and discerns two broad types of murderer in fiction: the elitist murderer and the democratic murderer. The former goes back to Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov and constitutes an exceptional character, the latter is instead 'an alarmingly normal person who simply realizes the fantasies that all of us nourish'.<sup>71</sup> It is this latter type which Robertson sees as predominant in modern German fiction, and strikingly it is also essentially this democratic type which features in Nabl's text. The narrator, who later murders Loschnitz's bailiff after being caught

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<sup>70</sup> See Ritchie Robertson, 'Every Man a Murderer? Violent Death in German Modernism', The Bernays Lecture 2003 (London: Kings College London Department of German, 2004), pp. 5-22.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

stealing books from the castle library, presents his murderous tendencies as latent unrealized urges common to everyone. This is clearly apparent when he argues:

Ihr verhüllt eure Gesichter und macht Gebärden des Abscheus, wenn von einem Mord gesprochen wird. Ihr verdreht die Augen in heuchlerischem Entsetzen. Aber ich frage: Wer von euch allen hat in seinem Leben nicht wenigstens einmal morden wollen, wer einem seiner Mitmenschen nicht wenigstens einmal den Tod gewünscht?! ... Lügt nicht und windet euch nicht durch die schmutzigen, stinkenden Gassen der Ausrede! Schlagt an die Brust und rufet: Schuldig! Schuldig! ... Ich werde euch darum nicht verdammen und strafen, denn ich verstehe den Mord. (FE, 114)

In this quotation, the madman presents himself as a more honest, more authentic character than so-called normal individuals, who are exposed as hypocritical adherents to an outdated weak morality. The influence of popular Nietzschean discourse is once again palpable here, and is further manifested in the fascination with egotistical outsider figures who retreat from society in order to lead a more genuine existence which runs through much of Nabl's writing. This is especially apparent, for example, in his first major novel *Ödhof*, which Nabl began working on at the same time as 'Dokument'. Here the protagonist Johannes Arlet moves to a lonely country estate hoping to live out his fantasies of subduing nature to his will and living without recourse to social life and its code of morality. Moreover, the tests of strength so crucial to Arlet's existence in *Ödhof*, are equally evident in 'Dokument', especially in the narrator's first encounter with Loschnitz. The aristocratic owner of a nearby castle, Loschnitz drives past the narrator in his carriage on a rainy day, splattering him with mud, since the latter refuses to budge from the centre of the country lane until the last moment: 'Ich hätte auf die Seite treten und

ausweichen können, aber ich tat es nicht. Ein merkwürdiges Unmutsgefühl beherrschte mich, und aus Verlangen, dem Mann, der im Wagen saß, eine Kränkung zuzufügen, blieb ich am Straßenrand stehen und ließ mich mit Kot bespritzen' (FE, 115). The narrator interprets his soaking as a defeat in the struggle for life, remarking: 'Da wußte ich, daß der Mann, dem das Gesicht gehörte, stärker war als ich und mir überlegen' (FE, 115-116). When Loschnitz visits the narrator the next day to offer a superficial apology and, noticing his interest in books, to invite him to visit him at his castle and take a tour of the library, the narrator is struck by admiration for the aristocrat, noting, for example, that he possesses the gait of a man with 'reinem, hohem Blut' (FE, 117). Later, though, his respect for the aristocrat escalates to obsession:

Ich denke sehr viel an Loschnitz, seitdem er fortgegangen ist. [...] Weil er ein Mensch ist, der sich über mich gestellt hat, der mich zwingt, zu ihm aufzuschauen und mich nach ihm zu sehnen. Ich empfinde wieder jenes Freundschaftsgefühl meiner ersten Jünglingsjahre. Hingerissenheit und schwärmerische Verehrung für einen anderen, der so ist, wie ich es niemals sein oder werden kann. Sehnsucht, von ihm bemerkt und geliebt zu werden, und ein unbezähmbares Verlangen, ihm zu dienen. Auf die elendste, niedrigste Weise. (FE, 123)

This passage betrays an fascination with strength and desire for subordination, which not only reappears in *Ödhof*, but seems more generally to anticipate elements of the cult of power and devotion characteristic of the Nazis' veneration of Hitler. More important, though, are the homosexual overtones of the narrator's fantasies evident here, which lead on from his instinctive attraction to Loschnitz when he first visits the narrator's house:

Er setzte sich wieder auf den Diwan und sah mich eine Zeitlang an. Sein Blick war überlegen und doch warm und rein. Ich hatte für einen Augenblick das Verlangen, neben ihm zu sitzen und den Arm um seine Schulter zu schlingen. Und dann fühlte ich vielleicht zum erstenmal im Leben, daß Liebe zwischen Männern nicht immer häßlich und abstoßend sein muß. (FE, 120)

It seems that Loschnitz's victory in the meaningless struggle for self-assertion on the street, as well as his good breeding and wholesome attractiveness, hold a deeply ambivalent appeal for the narrator. On the one hand, Loschnitz awakens ennobling feelings of tenderness which contradict the narrator's previous association of homosexuality with disgust and ugliness. On the other hand, the aristocrat provokes a craving for masochistic submission, which might at any moment be transformed into the opposite, the desire to humiliate him. For example, the narrator's longing to serve Loschnitz (FE, 123) is negated in the course of the same notebook entry, where he imagines a scene where he might triumphantly reject Loschnitz, by throwing his precious books onto the ground at his feet:

Stolz und aufgebläht wird er in seinem Büchersaal stehen und mir seine Schätze weisen. [...] Von diesem Augenblick an bin ich sein Herr. Ich werde ihm all den ledergebundenen Plunder vor die Füße werfen und dann stolz und höhnisch an ihm vorbeigehen: Der Stärkere. Und er wird dastehen, so wie einstmals ich am Straßenrand, über und über mit Kot bespritzt. (FE, 125)

Once he actually gets into the library, these fantasies are left unrealized and the narrator first praises Loschnitz and his noble heritage ('Es lebe der Feudaladel! Es lebe das Fideikommiß! ...', FE, 128) and then calls him an idiotic degenerate ('Dieser alberne, degenerierte Aristokrat, dieses Inzestprodukt', FE, 129). It seems that there are two

elements at work here. Firstly, the narrator is clearly torn between resentment and admiration of Loschnitz's social status and the privileges it entails. Hence, the earlier references to the blood aristocracy reveal the fragility of his claims to the primacy of a universal intellectual elite: 'Und alles, was du sprichst vom Adel des Geistes, ist nur ein armseliger Trost, eine erbärmliche Lüge. Der Adel des Blutes tritt auf deinen Nacken oder geht an dir vorbei und lacht' (FE, 123). Secondly, these passages reveal an integral sexual component to the narrator's interaction with Loschnitz, which oscillates between desire and disgust, the longing to possess and be possessed by him.

It is this notion of possession, of 'Besitz', which links both of these elements to the central aspect of the narrator's lunacy in the text, namely his obsession with books. Loschnitz is not only linked to 'Besitz' through his ownership of the castle and its library, but also tells the narrator after his first visit to the library: 'Aber jetzt gehören Sie mir!' (FE, 130). Moreover, while not explicit, it seems likely that the concept of possession, so central to the narrator's perverse bibliophilia, is, at least in part, a means by which his homosexual attraction to Loschnitz is transferred onto an inanimate object, which he can safely own and control, without the humiliating experience of admitting his taboo-breaking desire for other men. This is intimated by the narrator's cryptic reflections on how his own 'fruitless' passions are viewed culturally as unnatural, since they contribute nothing to the furtherance of the species:

Die fruchtbare Leidenschaft ist natürlich. [...] Sie flackert zum Nutzen der Gattung und sichert ihr die Erdherrschaft in ihren Grenzen. Darum Hut ab von ihr! [...] Alles andere aber ist obdachloses Gesindel. Landstreicher ohne Heimat und Lebensberechtigung.

Kinder ohne Eltern und selbst nicht zeugungsfähig. Sie kommen aus irgendeinem schlammigen Graben, aus einem muffigen Erdloch. Ihr Atem bringt Gift und Krankheit, ihre Berührung verdirbt die Treuen, ordnungsgemäß Geborenen. (FE, 130)

While this passage might be considered as related solely to the narrator's obsession with books, it can equally be interpreted as a veiled reference to his homosexual attraction to Loschnitz. This is supported by its position directly before the apparent extinction of his feelings for the aristocrat, and their replacement with a fixation on the idea that the books in his library, from now on the sole objects of the narrator's fetishistic desire, actually belong by rights to the narrator. Moreover, the terminology of 'Gift und Krankheit', and especially the opposition of fertile and infertile passions is suggestive of contemporary bourgeois views of homosexuality, and also echoes the narrator's earlier association of 'männliche Liebe' and disgust.

Nevertheless, the central importance of the narrator's book fetishism which takes over the narrative from this point onwards is not something which originates here, but is instead shown to stem from the narrator's childhood. Early in the text, the reader learns that the narrator's love of books can be traced back to an early memory, where he was given an indestructible picture book as a Christmas present. Even at this early stage, the narrator remembers that it was not so much the book's contents which captivated his imagination but something 'Seltsames und Unbestimmtes' (FE, 104), related especially to the smell of the print. As he got older his attraction to the qualities of books as objects developed further and we learn that he likes to sit stroking the covers of books and turning the pages, but seldom actually reading them. Furthermore, the narrator soon notes

that his own books could no longer satisfy him and he began to desire those belonging to his father: ‘Zuletzt genügten aber alle meine Bücher, so viele ich deren auch besaß, nicht mehr, meinen seltsamen Trieb zu befriedigen’ (FE, 105). The use of the term ‘Trieb’ here intimates for the first time the libidinal connotations of the narrator’s bibliophilia. This impression is subsequently reinforced by the language used to describe an episode of adolescent disloyalty to his true passion for books, where he sold his library to buy an electrical cabinet for physics experiments: ‘Wenn ich mich heute in jene Zeit zurückversetze, dann komme ich mir vor wie einer, der seine treue Geliebte um einer Metze willen verstoßen hat. Aber damals waren mir solche Gedanken fremd’ (FE, 108). This association between books and women is repeatedly stressed throughout the remainder of the text. The spines of the freshly stolen books are compared to ‘Frauenbrüste, ewig jung und nun ganz mein’ (FE, 146) and when the narrator fails to derive his usual sensual pleasure from the volumes in Loschnitz’s library, we are told that this is because they do not belong to him and that touching them therefore feels like a disgusting act of adultery:

Ich sprang auf und fuhr mit der Hand über eine Reihe von Bücherrücken. Ich nahm einzelne Bände heraus. Ich betastete sie, ich schlug sie auf ... Schätze! Schätze!! [...] Und ich wollte mich zwingen. Zur Liebe zwingen. Aber mir war zumut, als sollte ich eine Frau in dem Schlafzimmer, ja auf dem Bett ihres Mannes umarmen. Mich mit ihr auf einem Leintuch herumwälzen, das noch warm war von seinem Körper! ... Das konnte ich nicht. Das konnte ich nie! ... Fort, fort über die Treppe, hinaus aus dem Schloß! Der Ekel flog hinter mir. (FE, 137)<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For further examples of the correlation between sexual relationships and the narrator’s obsession with books see FE, p. 108, 110, pp. 128-129, p. 130, 131, 143, 146.

Of course, since the narrator's preferred imagery consistently links books with women, rather than men, it might seem strange that he should harbour homoerotic feelings toward Loschnitz. However, even if the narrator has never felt any kind of sexual attraction towards women, as he himself suggests (FE, 130), it is still understandable that the language used to refer to sexuality should be drawn from the socially and psychologically acceptable semantic field of heterosexuality. After all, as we have already seen, he is outwardly aware of the taboo surrounding same-sex love, and has grown up with the idea that it is something abhorrent.

In any case, irrespective of how we judge this, it is quite clear that Nabl consciously takes up the theme of sexual fetishism in 'Dokument', already known to Austrian literature through Leopold Sacher-Masoch's notorious novel *Venus im Pelz* (1870).<sup>73</sup> Moreover, since the story was published after the explosion of interest in the phenomenon within the burgeoning disciplines of sexology and psychoanalysis, it was able to incorporate aspects of a theoretical discourse on fetishism, which had itself been informed to no small extent by earlier literary examples of sexual aberration, notably by writers such as Sacher-Masoch, during the period of its inception.<sup>74</sup> For example, by tracing the narrator's memory of the origins of his book fetish back to a childhood scene

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<sup>73</sup> W. G. Sebald in his essays on Austrian literature revealingly detects fetishistic structures at work in Stifter and Hofmannsthal. See Sebald, *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks*, pp. 15-37 (pp. 31-33) and pp. 61-77 (pp. 76-77).

<sup>74</sup> Literature was of foundational importance for the scientific discourse of sexuality and perversion, as the coining of the categorical term 'Masochism' by Richard Krafft-Ebing in the sixth edition of his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1891) illustrates. See Hartmut Böhme, *Fetischismus und Kultur: Eine andere Theorie der Moderne* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2006), p. 377 and 388. For a contemporary treatment of sexual fetishism see Iwan Bloch, *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur*, 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> edn (Berlin: Marcus, 1919), pp. 632-653. For a useful critical discussion of this sexological literature see Nike Wagner, *Geist und Geschlecht: Karl Kraus und die Erotik der Wiener Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), esp. pp. 67-84.

in his mother's room, Nabl firmly locates his literary portrayal of sexual fetishism within the orbit of the psychoanalytical theories of its aetiology, most famously formulated by Freud in his study *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905). Here Freud draws on earlier work by the French psychologist Alfred Binet, asserting that the fixation of a fetish on a certain object is based on a form of early sexual 'Urszene' dating from the fetishist's childhood.<sup>75</sup> While Nabl's text makes no attempt to insist on this dogmatically, the structure of his novella is clearly commensurate with Freud's explanation, and is even compatible with Freud's more outlandish insistence on the important role of castration fear in the development of sexual fetishism.<sup>76</sup> This becomes especially apparent when we recall both the spatial dimension of the young narrator's memory ('ich kann mich noch ganz gut erinnern, daß ich die längste Zeit in dem Zimmer meiner Mutter auf dem Fußboden lag und mich mit diesem Buch beschäftigte', FE, 104) and his later envy of his father's books and wish to displace him as their owner (FE, 105-106).

Crucially, the last line of the text also creates a connection to psychological discourse, with its use of the loan-word 'Suggestion', borrowed from nineteenth-century French writings on the practice of dynamic psychiatry.<sup>77</sup> Deriving from a preoccupation with the powers of imagination stretching back to the Renaissance, the role of suggestion and autosuggestion were studied above all by Hippolyte Bernheim, Ambroise-Auguste Liébault and other adherents of their Nancy School of psychotherapy. Suggestion was

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<sup>75</sup> See Sigmund Freud, 'Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie' in FSA, V: *Sexualleben*, pp. 39-145 (pp. 64-65) and Böhme, p. 396.

<sup>76</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 101 and also Freud 'Fetischmus' [1927] in FSA, III: *Psychologie des Unbewußten*, pp. 379-388 (p. 384).

<sup>77</sup> See Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Fontana, 1994), pp. 110-181.

based above all on the concept of ‘ideodynamism’, described by Bernheim as the propensity of an ‘idea to materialise into an act’ and could be applied as a therapeutic procedure both in a waking and a hypnotic state.<sup>78</sup> Strikingly, post-hypnotic suggestion, the phenomenon where subjects would carry out orders given in hypnotic sleep during a wakeful state, plays an important role in Maupassant’s *Le Horla*, a work which, as we have seen, resembles ‘Dokument’ in form and subject-matter. In Maupassant’s story the narrator-protagonist meets an exponent of hypnotism and suggestion, Dr Parent, who proceeds to hypnotize the narrator’s sceptical cousin, suggesting to her that her husband is in debt and that she must ask the protagonist for five thousand francs the next morning. When the cousin does this, despite no longer being hypnotized, the disturbed narrator becomes convinced that his delusions are also the product of a similar form of suggestion:

That is exactly how my poor cousin was possessed and controlled that day when she tried to borrow the five thousand francs. She was acting under an alien will which had entered into her, like a second soul, another parasitical, overbearing soul. [...] What sort of creature is it who has taken control of me?<sup>79</sup>

In contrast, Nabl’s deranged narrator does not perceive himself as acting under the suggestive influence of some external being, but rather intends to employ the techniques of autosuggestion at the end of the text to enable himself to commit suicide.<sup>80</sup> This

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-115 and p. 151.

<sup>79</sup> Guy de Maupassant, ‘Le Horla’ in *A Day in the Country and Other Stories*, trans. by David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 275-302 (p. 293).

<sup>80</sup> The psychotherapeutic techniques of autosuggestion were popularized by Bernheim’s und Liébault’s student Émile Coué. See Ellenberger, p. 174.

enigmatic concluding statement, which portrays suggestion as ‘schließlich unser erstes und letztes’ (FE, 148) goes beyond this final scene, however, and can be fruitfully related to the psychological mechanisms through which he enables himself to steal the books and commit murder in the first place. Thus we observe the narrator’s attempts to convince himself that he is the owner of the castle and everything in it: ‘Ich bin im Büchersaal, in diesem Kerker meiner Seele, auf und ab gegangen und habe zu mir gesprochen: “Du bist der Herr dieses Schlosses, Du allein bist hier. Und alles gehört dir...”’ (FE, 138). The text does not limit itself to the description of these acts of suggestion, but actually enacts them. In this sense, strange sections, such as the paragraph beginning: ‘Menschen, denen ich niemals etwas Böses zufügte, haben mir mein Weib, meine Geliebte gestohlen’ (FE, 131), can be interpreted as attempts by the demented narrator to convince himself of the justification of his desires and the actions they stimulate through the medium of writing. This is further borne out when he outlines his plan to appropriate Loschnitz’s books, maintaining: ‘Ich werde mir die Bücher nehmen. Nicht stehlen. Ich werde sie mir nehmen. Sie gehören mir’ (FE, 140). The title of the text then invites us not only to read it as a kind of literary case history, but also as a document illustrating the destructive potential hidden in the powers of suggestion, reversing their positive application in the field of psychotherapy. Read in this way, ‘Dokument’ does more than just re-work aspects of turn-of-the-century psychoanalysis and sexology. Instead, Nabl draws on these prominent contemporary discourses, in order to produce an arresting exploration of the complex psychological mechanisms underlying obsession.

## Conclusion

Far from revealing a series of formally and ideologically old-fashioned stories bearing little relation to the mainstream of fin-de-siècle Austrian literature, or even directed firmly against it, this chapter has repeatedly uncovered previously unrecognized and stimulating overlaps between Nabl's early prose and writing more commonly associated with literary modernism. Nabl's texts – I have suggested – can be fruitfully compared to works by many of the early twentieth century's leading writers, including Kafka, Musil, Hofmannsthal and most importantly Schnitzler. They frequently treat characteristically contemporary themes, such as insanity, neurosis, murder and homosexuality, and repeatedly question nineteenth-century bourgeois ideals of sexual morality and domesticity. They also draw on strands of scientific and pseudoscientific discourse central to the intellectual ferment of turn-of-the-century Europe, such as popular Darwinism, sexology and psychoanalysis.<sup>81</sup> From the perspective of style and form, the prose works examined in this chapter even exhibit various literary innovations conventionally, although possibly too eagerly, regarded as hallmarks of modernism. These include the employment of an unreliable narrator in 'Dokument', the open-ended conclusion to *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr*, the sustained use of free indirect speech in 'Komödie', and the utilization of the Doppelgänger motif to represent a divided personality in 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist'. All of this, however, does not simply

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<sup>81</sup> Revealingly Werner Michler argues that the literary preoccupation with the discourse of Darwinism characterizes both Viennese modernists and writers connected to the tradition of realism to such an extent as to render the distinction itself, at least on this point, almost obsolete. See Michler, p. 296.

suggest that Nabl's work can be simply re-categorized, pigeonholing it as modernist rather than realist, or contemporary rather than anachronistic. Instead, it underlines the need to develop a more differentiated understanding of both his writing and its literary context, and to question the usefulness of rigidly applied literary-historical labels. The new critical readings provided not only by this chapter, but also by the rest of this thesis, are intended as a first step toward achieving this goal.

## Chapter 2

### **‘Vater! ... Verzeih mir alles, was ich dir getan hab’: The Father-Son Conflict in Franz Nabl’s *Ödhof* in Literary Context**

#### **Introduction: *Ödhof* and the Critics**

Nabl’s second novel, *Ödhof. Bilder aus den Kreisen der Familie Arlet*, was completed in 1910. The first section of the work subsequently appeared in both the *Vossische Zeitung* and *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, before the novel was published in its entirety as a two-volume book edition by Egon Fleischel in 1911.<sup>82</sup> Although by no means a bestseller, the text served to firmly establish Nabl’s position on the Austrian literary scene, and was greeted with positive, often even enthusiastic reviews in important periodicals and newspapers.<sup>83</sup> A survey of these initial critical responses reveals a number of clear tendencies, which have continued to dominate and, at the same time,

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<sup>82</sup> Nabl later speculated that the newspapers’ editors refrained from publishing the second section of the novel because of its controversial material: ‘Vor dem Abdruck des zweiten Teiles schreckten die Redaktionen wohl aus stofflichen Gründen ebenso wie vor dem Abdruck der Novelle “Komödie”.’ See MW, p. 81.

<sup>83</sup> The ‘Werkverzeichnis’ compiled by Nabl and his second wife Ilse lists 14 articles on *Ödhof* published in 1912, including among them reviews in the French periodical *Mercure de France*, as well as in major newspapers, such as the *Neue Freie Presse*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and *Vossische Zeitung* and in periodicals, such as *Kunstwart* and *Das Litterarische Echo*. See Nabl, ‘Werkverzeichnis’, *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1334-1372 (pp. 1363-1364). Nabl’s Nachlass contains a scrapbook with a much larger collection of reviews not listed in the ‘Werkverzeichnis’. See NN/FNI, Rezensionen/Besprechungen.

distort Nabl's literary reputation until the present day.<sup>84</sup> Firstly, the novel's early reviewers frequently sought to enhance the text's standing by contrasting it positively with current literary trends, especially with the more or less negatively connoted decadence of the Jung-Wien writers. For example, writing in the Berlin periodical *Das Litterarische Echo*, Arthur Eloesser maintained: 'Ihm [Nabl] fehlt alles, was zur Mode gehört: ängstliche Beobachtung, kokettes Schwärmertum und weichliche Selbstauflösung. Und so hat er sich vom österreichischen Wesen die naturnahe Eigenwüchsigkeit statt der ältlichen und elegisch verspielten Jugendlichkeit genommen.'<sup>85</sup> In a similar vein, Theodor Tagger argued in the *Berliner Tageblatt*: 'Nabl ist Oesterreicher. Aber nicht einer von den ebenso charmanten wie oberflächlichen Impressionisten der Wiener Schule, sondern ein sehr ernster Arbeiter, der mit kräftigen durchmühten Händen die Gestalten formt, so festgefügt und ohne Lücken, als wären sie in Stein gehauen.'<sup>86</sup> Secondly, and even less justly, others even mistakenly took the novel for Provinzkunst, as Klara Mautner's review in the *Neue Freie Presse* illustrates. Praising Nabl's allegedly sensitive evocation of the Alpine farmer in direct opposition to the text's actual contents, Mautner enthused: 'Mitten im Bauernland liegt er [der Ödhof], und vielleicht ist der österreichische Alpenbauer noch nie so scharf und wahr gezeichnet

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<sup>84</sup> For a critical discussion of these early reviews see Karlheinz Rossbacher, 'Franz Nabl's "Ödhof" in den ersten Rezensionen' in Johann Holzner and others (ed.), *Studien zur Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts in Österreich. Festschrift für Alfred Doppler zum 60. Geburtstag* (Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik der Universität Innsbruck, 1981), pp. 107-119. For a general overview of the novel's reception see Noelle, pp. 257-277.

<sup>85</sup> Arthur Eloesser, 'Ödhof. Bilder aus den Kreisen der Familie Arlet', *Das Litterarische Echo. Halbmonatschrift für Literaturfreunde*, XIV (1911-1912), 583-584 (p. 584).

<sup>86</sup> See the review by Theodor Tagger (Ferdinand Bruckner), *Berliner Tageblatt* (28 February 1912) in NN/FNI, Rezensionen/Besprechungen.

worden.’<sup>87</sup> Some critics, such as Paul Zech, even combined both elements in stylizing Nabl, implausibly as my analysis of his early work has shown, as a provincial competitor to urban Modernism:

Zu den vielversprechenden Dichtern von Jung-Österreich hat sich jetzt ein neuer Mann von kräftiger Eigenart gestellt: Franz Nabl. Mit Pausbacken kommt er daher und rüttelt stürmisch an den schillernden Eklektizismus derer um Hofmannsthal und Schnitzler. Unten in der weltabgelegenen Provinz, auf heimatlichem Grund und Boden, im unmittelbaren Verkehr mit der großen jungfräulichen Stille, hat er sich gebildet.<sup>88</sup>

Taken together, these views actually reveal little about Nabl’s novel other than its ability to frustrate even professional readers by its apparent resistance to the established categories of early twentieth-century Austrian literature, which tempted baffled critics to categorize the novel inaccurately. This sense of frustration is even manifest in the views of more sophisticated later commentators, such as Karlheinz Rossbacher, who concludes his analysis of the novel and its early reception by remarking: ‘Franz Nabls “Ödhof” enthält Ambivalenz in seinem Text und bleibt eine Irritation beim Lesen.’<sup>89</sup>

This chapter aims to relieve these symptoms of intellectual frustration and irritation through a fresh examination of Nabl’s *Ödhof*, focused especially on the central theme of father-son conflict. A detailed critical interpretation of the text will suggest how it relates to the literary context in which it first appeared, without attempting to place the work in any one literary-historical pigeonhole. In doing so, Thomas Mann’s

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<sup>87</sup> Klara Mautner, ‘Franz Nabl: “Ödhof”’, *Neue Freie Presse* (Vienna, 4 February 1912) in NN/FNI, Rezensionen/Besprechungen. Also quoted by Rossbacher in “‘Ödhof’ in den ersten Rezensionen’, p. 112.

<sup>88</sup> See Paul Zech, ‘Franz Nabl: “Ödhof”’, *Generalanzeiger für Elberfeld-Barmen* (13 February 1912) in NN/FNI, Rezensionen/Besprechungen.

<sup>89</sup> Rossbacher, “‘Ödhof’ in den ersten Rezensionen’, p. 117.

*Buddenbrooks* will be drawn upon as a particularly illuminating point of critical comparison and contrast, a work which Nabl admired and which he explicitly mentioned as an inspiration for at least one section of *Ödhof*.<sup>90</sup> Thus, Mann's earlier masterpiece will be shown to act not only as a source and inspiration for *Ödhof*, but at the same time enable the individual contours of Nabl's depiction of father-son conflict to be more sharply delineated.

### **'Timeless Naturalism': Concepts of Literary Art in Nabl and Thomas Mann**

In a series of lectures given as part of a summer school at the University of Graz in 1934, Nabl praises Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, emphasizing above all its 'seelischen und, im Grunde genommen, zeitlosen Naturalismus'.<sup>91</sup> In the course of these lectures, Nabl associates this quality with almost all of the writers whom he holds in high regard and often makes it his central criterion when judging the aesthetic value of the literary works he discusses.<sup>92</sup> For example, he criticizes Wilhelm von Polenz's novel of rural decline, *Der Büttnerbauer* (1895), maintaining:

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<sup>90</sup> See Helmut Scharf, 'Gespräch mit Franz Nabl', *Neue Zeit* (15 September 1965) and Hellmuth Himmel, 'Franz Nabls Roman "Die Ortliebschen Frauen". Eine Analyse' in *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1195-1226 (p. 1205). A number of early reviewers draw comparisons with *Buddenbrooks*. For example, see Eloesser, Zech, and the anonymous review entitled 'Vater und Söhne', *Literaturbeilage der Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung für April 1912*. Later also Adelbert Muhr, 'Die österreichischen Buddenbrooks', *Neues Österreich* (26 March 1955). All collected in NN/FNI, Reszensionen/Besprechungen.

<sup>91</sup> Franz Nabl, 'Deutsches Drama und Deutsche Erzählung 1900-1930', *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1271-1333 (p. 1287).

<sup>92</sup> Nabl applies the category not only to canonical literary figures, such as Gerhart Hauptmann and Wilhelm Raabe, but also to lesser authors, such as Julius Jakob David and Gustav Frenssen.

Es fehlt letzten Endes das, was ich den Naturalismus des Seelischen nennen möchte; die Fähigkeit, Schöpfer und Geschöpf zugleich zu sein, die vielleicht allein das dichterisch halbwegs vollendete Kunstwerk, wenigstens soweit es sich um Menschendarstellung handelt, zustande kommen läßt. Das wird eben nur dort möglich, wo der innere Reichtum des Dichters ihm vergönnt, neben der eigenlebendigen Hauptgestalt noch andere Gestalten vom eigenen Ich abzuspalten und mit eigenem Leben zu erfüllen, so daß sich ihr Tun und Lassen und Reden notwendig aus ihrer von ihrem Schöpfer stufenweise miterlebten und mitentwickelten Wesensart ergibt. Ist diese Fähigkeit gar nicht vorhanden, dann entsteht nur ein mehr oder weniger geschickt erzählter Roman, ist sie in beschränktem Maß vorhanden, dann tritt der immer beobachtete Fall ein, daß ein Dichter nur *ein* Buch, eben *sein* Buch zu schreiben vermag, während erst unbegrenzte innere Fülle die Schaffung mehrerer gültiger Werke erlaubt.<sup>93</sup>

Thus Nabl's notion of the timeless 'Naturalism' common to all great works of literature, has nothing to do with the conventional use of the term in literary history, and is instead based on the highly subjective interaction between the author and his characters, whereby the former endows the latter with life through the process of creation. Strikingly, the concept of literary art Nabl champions here strongly recalls the views outlined by Mann in 'Bilse und Ich' (1906).<sup>94</sup>

In this earlier essay, Mann reacts to the widespread outcry precipitated by the publication of *Buddenbrooks* among angry Lübeck citizens who believed that they had been used unfairly as models for characters in the novel and then portrayed unflatteringly.<sup>95</sup> In response, Mann rejects the view of *Buddenbrooks* as a 'Schlüsselroman', especially its association with Fritz Oswald Bilse's scandalous *Aus einer kleinen Garnison. Ein militärisches Zeitbild* (1903), and defends the artist's right to

<sup>93</sup> Nabl, 'Deutsches Drama und Deutsche Erzählung 1900-1930', p. 1282.

<sup>94</sup> Mann's essay was first published in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* on 15/16 February 1906, the same newspaper which issued the first part of Nabl's *Ödhof* in 1910.

<sup>95</sup> See Gero von Wilpert, 'Die Rezeptionsgeschichte' in *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, ed. by Ken Moulden and Gero von Wilpert (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1988), pp. 319-341 (p. 322).

draw on real-life situations and models, noting that this has always been a practice shared by great writers. He then proceeds to emphasize the central role played by the poetic animation of the writer's material in literary production, stressing: 'Es ist *nicht* die Gabe der Erfindung – die der Beseelung ist es, welche den Dichter macht.'<sup>96</sup> This concept of 'Beseelung' exhibits a clear affinity with Nabl's notion of 'Naturalismus des Seelischen'.

For example, Mann asserts:

Um auf die "Beseelung" zurückzukommen, so ist sie zuletzt nichts anderes als jener dichterische Vorgang, den man die *subjektive Vertiefung* des Abbildes einer Wirklichkeit nennen kann. Es ist bekannt, daß jeder echte Dichter sich bis zu einem gewissen Grade mit seinen Geschöpfen identifiziert. Alle Gestalten einer Dichtung, mögen sie noch so feindlich gegeneinander gestellt sein, sind Emanationen des dichtenden Ich, und Goethe ist zugleich in Antonio und Tasso lebendig wie Turgenew zugleich in Basaroff und Paul Petrowitsch. (MFA XIV.I, 101-102)

Both writers, then, share the conviction that an author's literary creations are always, at least in part, a complex reflection of his own subjectivity. This is not to say that the author always identifies directly with his characters, but that there is something of the author and his experiences, in every one of his creations, and it is this that gives them their aesthetic validity. Moreover, the similarities in their conceptions of art do not end here, but also extend to a shared belief in the vital, yet painful role of perception in true artistic creation. In 'Bilse und Ich' Mann describes the post-Nietzschean critical artist, postulating:

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas Mann, 'Bilse und Ich' in Mann, *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Werke – Briefe – Tagebücher*, ed. by Heinrich Detering and others (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002-), XIV.I: *Essays I 1893-1914*, ed. by Heinrich Detering (2002), pp. 95-114 (p. 100). Henceforth cited in text as MFA XIV.I with page numbers.

Der Künstler [...] will tief erkennen und schön gestalten; und das geduldige und stolze Ertragen der Schmerzen, die von beidem unzertrennlich sind, gibt seinem Leben die sittliche Weihe. Weiß man um diese Schmerzen? Daß alles Gestalten, Schaffen, Hervorbringen *Schmerz* ist, Kampf und kreißende Qual, man weiß es vielleicht, man sollte es wissen [...]. Daß aber auch die Erkenntnis, jene künstlerische Erkenntnis, die man gemeinhin als "Beobachtung" bezeichnet, *wehe* tut – weiß man auch das? Die Beobachtung als Leidenschaft, als Passion, Martyrium, Heldentum – wer kennt sie? (MFA XIV.I, 106)

That Nabl was also acutely aware of this problem is illustrated by his later essay 'Wahrheit und Dichtung' (1948). In this piece, the only direct reflection on his literary practice that he published, Nabl identifies the agonizing process of self-scrutiny and self-perception as the key to the creation of psychologically believable characters in works of fiction:

Erst wer in der Selbsterkenntnis sich bis zu den unentwickelten Keimen und Wurzeln durchgerungen hat, der wird eben auch andere Menschen, bei denen wiederum solche Keime zu sichtbarer Vollendung gereift sind, mit verhältnismäßiger Wahrheitstreue schildern können. [...] Begreiflicherweise ist es für den Menschenschilderer, der seinen Beruf ernst und ehrlich nimmt, keine leichte Aufgabe, sich zu dieser äußersten und sehr schmerzhaften Form der Selbsterkenntnis durchzuarbeiten. Aber ich meine, nur dann, wenn es ihm gelingt, darf er sich anmaßen, andere Menschen – nach seinem Bilde gleichsam – zu schaffen und die Wurzeln ihrer Taten und Schicksale bloßzulegen. Sich selbst mit unbarmherziger Klarheit zu durchschauen, das ist für jeden Gestalter eines nach Gültigkeit und Vollendung strebenden Kunstwerks die unerläßliche Vorbedingung. Sie tut oft bitter weh, aber sie hat doch auch ihr Gutes und kann uns für die Schmerzen und Demütigungen vor uns selbst, die sie uns bereitet, entschädigen.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Franz Nabl, 'Wahrheit und Dichtung. Ein Blick in die Werkstatt des Schaffenden' [1948] in Nabl, *Ausgewählte Werke*, 4 vols (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau; Vienna: Buchgemeinschaft Donauland, 1965), I: *Der Griff ins Dunkel*, pp. 23-29 (p. 28). Quotations from this edition are henceforth cited in text as AW I, II, III and IV with page numbers.

While this view, with its emphasis on merciless introspection, lacks the polemical hubris of Mann's contention in 'Bilse und Ich', it is still evident that Nabl could find in Mann both a role-model and a strong impulse for his own understanding of the artistic process. The 'zeitlose[n] Naturalismus' Nabl identified in the older writer's novels was, of course, an aesthetic ideal that he strove to achieve in his own work. Nevertheless, it is not the concept of art underlying Nabl's *Ödhof* which provides its most important point of contact with *Buddenbrooks*, but rather the crucial role played by father-son conflict in both novels.

### **Between Tradition and Biography: Patriarchal Conflict in Modern German Literature**

Conflict with patriarchal authority is, of course, a recurrent literary theme dating back to the beginnings of the Western canon.<sup>98</sup> Yet the subject held a special fascination for writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and features in a remarkable number of works during the period.<sup>99</sup> A brief examination of German-language literature alone around 1900 demonstrates this, revealing a wealth of examples in both drama and fiction. For instance, Ludwig Anzengruber's play *Der Meineidbauer* (1871) treats the

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<sup>98</sup> For example, it already appears in Hesiod's *Theogony*, is prominent in the stories of the Old Testament, and even constitutes the subject of the earliest extant text in the German language, the *Hildebrandslied* (810/820). See also Elisabeth Frenzel, 'Vater-Sohn-Konflikt' in *Motive der Weltliteratur. Ein Lexikon dichtungsgeschichtlicher Längsschnitte*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1999), pp. 727-744.

<sup>99</sup> See Thomi Tholen, 'Vater-und-Sohn-Verhältnisse in der Literatur der Moderne. Von Goethe bis zur Gegenwart', *Weimarer Beiträge*, 48 (2002), 325-343 (pp. 327-328) and for a longer term perspective Peter von Matt, *Verkommene Söhne, mißratene Töchter: Familiendesaster in der Literatur* (Munich: Hanser, 1995).

conflict between Matthias Ferner, a farmer who commits perjury in order to retain control of his family farm on his elder brother's death, and his son Franz, the only witness to his father's dishonesty. While Matthias attempts to force his son into the priesthood so that he can secretly absolve him of his sins, Franz wants to become a farmer. When Franz supports the claims of the rightful heir to the Ferner estate, his uncle's illegitimate daughter Vroni, his father shoots him, and believing him dead dies of a stroke. Franz, however, survives and marries Vroni, putting his father's underhand deeds to right. Another variation on the theme of generational conflict over the family farm occurs in the Tyrolean Karl Schönherr's *Erde* (1907), where an aging tyrant refuses to step aside for his weaker son, crushing the latter's dreams of starting a family. Yet the dramatic representation of patriarchal conflict in the period was not only a concern of realistic plays, loosely connected to the tradition of Naturalism, such as those by Anzengruber and Schönherr. In fact, it became one of the central preoccupations of the new generation of Expressionist dramatists, who frequently set dramatic father-son conflicts against the background of oedipal desire. *Der Bettler* (1912) by Reinhard Johannes Sorge, *Der Sohn* (1914) by Walter Hasenclever and *Vatermord* (written 1915, published 1920) by Arnolt Bronnen, for example, all feature protagonists who revolt against, and ultimately confront their tyrannical fathers resulting directly or indirectly in the latter's deaths, and all thematize oedipal desire to a lesser or greater extent.

Conflict between tyrannical and authoritarian father figures and their weaker sons is also a recurrent feature in the German prose of the period. Alongside Mann's portrayal of Thomas and Hanno in the realist novel *Buddenbrooks*, the prose authors of the

Expressionist decade repeatedly engaged with the theme. This is true of many works by Franz Kafka, especially *Das Urteil* (1913) and his unpublished *Brief an den Vater* (written in 1919, published 1952).<sup>100</sup> The most startling example though is Franz Werfel's novella *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig* (1920), which like *Das Urteil*, also turns on the confrontation between an aging tyrant and a son unable to escape his influence.<sup>101</sup> In Werfel's text, the unreliable first-person narrator, an ex-officer and archetypal representative of the Expressionist generation of sons, describes the destructive emotional and mental consequences of his militaristic upbringing by a patriarchal tyrant, himself a high-ranking army official. Forced into a military career for which he has neither talent nor interest, the narrator later becomes an opium addict and is involved (or imagines himself involved) with a group of anarchist freemasons, whose explicit aim is to destroy the patriarchal order: "Unser Krieg gilt der patriarchalischen Weltordnung," sagte der Alte. [...] "Die Herrschaft des Vaters in jedem Sinn."<sup>102</sup> Eventually the narrator, who imagines that he has been selected to assassinate the Russian Tsar during a secret visit, is arrested for an assault on a superior during a raid on his opium den. Shortly afterwards, the narrator turns his back on the army and on Europe for good, but not before a climactic confrontation with his now elderly and sickly father. After hiding himself in the older man's bedroom, the narrator-protagonist threatens to kill his father as he stands naked and cowed before him using the very dumbbell the patriarch

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<sup>100</sup> For a comparison between the treatment of the theme of parental judgement in Kafka's *Das Urteil* and Nabl's 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' see Chapter 1 above.

<sup>101</sup> Werfel's novel was possibly influenced by Kafka. See Malcolm Pasley, 'Werfel and Kafka' in *Franz Werfel: an Austrian Writer Reassessed*, ed. by Lothar Huber (Oxford: Berg, 1989), pp. 81-91 (p. 86).

<sup>102</sup> Franz Werfel, *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig* (Munich: Kurt Wolff, 1920), p. 98.

had forced him to lift as a child. In the end, he does not follow through with the deed, but still regards it as a symbolic act of parricide, equivalent to the real case of which he reads shortly before leaving on a ship bound for America. This complex work shares the revolutionary pathos and vitalism of Expressionist drama and through its greater psychological depth provides an invaluable insight into the generational conflict of the period.

This becomes all the more apparent when one recognizes the extent to which patriarchal conflict was not just a preoccupation of literature in the early twentieth century but also highly prominent in other aspects of fin-de-siècle cultural life. This was especially the case in Austria, where it played a central role in Freudian psychoanalysis, and is well illustrated by the much publicized scandal surrounding Otto Gross. One of Freud's disciples, Gross campaigned against the nuclear family and was declared morally insane and committed to an asylum by his own father, a leading professor of law at the University of Graz.<sup>103</sup> Among Gross's enthusiastic readers was Franz Kafka, who met him in 1917 and discussed plans to found a journal to be entitled, 'Blätter zur Bekämpfung des Machtwillens'.<sup>104</sup> The anarchists in Werfel's novella, who may or may not be a figment of the disturbed narrator's opium-fuelled imagination, would, of course, have approved. This is largely because Kafka, Gross and Werfel were all living and writing in a cultural environment shaped by generational conflict. Nabl's *Ödhof* with its

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<sup>103</sup> On Otto Gross' life and work see Emanuel Hurwitz, *Otto Gross. Paradies-Sucher zwischen Freud und Jung* (Zürich, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979). On his influence on German Expressionist literature see Jennifer E. Michaels, *Anarchy and Eros. Otto Gross' Impact on German Expressionist Writers* (New York: Peter Lang, 1983).

<sup>104</sup> See Thomas Anz, 'Jemand mußte Otto G. verleumdet haben... Kafka, Werfel, Otto Gross und eine "psychiatrische Geschichte"', *Akzente*, 31 (1984), 184-91 (p. 189).

equally central focus on father-son conflict belongs to this very environment. In these terms, then, the received idea that Nabl's novel was isolated from mainstream literary and intellectual culture, or that it stood in opposition to it, appears increasingly unconvincing.<sup>105</sup> On the contrary, *Ödhof* actually fits into a broad and undeniably prominent pattern in early twentieth-century literature and culture.

This explosion of interest in father-son conflict around 1900 is commonly regarded as a reflection of significant socio-historical transformations during the late nineteenth century.<sup>106</sup> Industrialization, urbanization, the failure of economic liberalism signalled in Austria by the 1873 stock-market crash, the conflict of church and state, Nietzsche's rejection of traditional values and metaphysics: all of these factors are seen as contributing to an atmosphere of social, intellectual and artistic upheaval which led successive generations of writers to reflect upon and question the convictions of their father's generation. Yet these stock explanations are of limited general value for analysing literary treatments of father-son conflict, and are particularly unhelpful in appreciating Nabl's portrayal of the theme in *Ödhof*. Unlike Expressionist works, such as Hasenclever's *Der Sohn* or Werfel's *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig*, where the revolt of the son against patriarchal authority is explicitly linked to larger scale acts of social rebellion aimed at overthrowing completely the outdated values of the older generation, Nabl approaches the theme from an inherently personal perspective, as a crisis of family life.

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<sup>105</sup> On this point see Chapter 1 above.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Roszbacher, "Ödhof" in den ersten Rezensionen', p. 113 and Tholen, p. 333.

The details of Nabl's early life and upbringing undoubtedly played a significant role both in motivating this decision and the manner of its artistic realization. In *Der erloschene Stern* (1962), the author relates the bitter loneliness of his childhood under the influence of a father whom he describes as a 'jähzorniger unbeherrschter Mann und unduldsam gegen jeden Widerspruch' and later as an 'unnahbarer, gefürchteter Tyrann'.<sup>107</sup> It becomes clear too that the thickly forested estate where much of the action of *Ödhof* takes place is based on the Gstettenhof in the Lower Austrian Türnitz valley, purchased by Nabl's father as a summer residence after the death of his beloved daughter Liane from a typhus infection contracted on holiday near St Wolfgang in the Salzkammergut.<sup>108</sup> However, the strong influence of Nabl's own first-hand experience of life in the shadow of a dominant and authoritarian father-figure on his fictional treatment of father-son relationships is hardly uncommon. Indeed, when scrutinized more closely, the most obvious connection between works focused on this theme in the period is more often than not autobiographical experience. Kafka's troubled relationship with his own father, for example, is well documented; Joseph Roth explicitly cited real-life models for his treatment of the theme in his short novel *Zipper und sein Vater* (1928); and in a 1923 letter Thomas Mann wrote: 'Meine Herkunft ist ja in den "Buddenbrooks"', deren

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<sup>107</sup> Franz Nabl, *Der erloschene Stern. Eine Kindheit und Jugend um die Jahrhundertwende* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1962), p. 17 and 19.

<sup>108</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 274 and MW, p. 8.

autobiographischer Fortsetzung gewissermaßen “Tonio Kröger” ist, mit übermäßiger Genauigkeit beschrieben.’<sup>109</sup>

However, what is important in the works of all of these writers, Nabl included, is not a mimetic relationship between autobiography and fiction, which might reduce the author to a mere ‘Abschreiber der Wirklichkeit’ (AW I, 27), as Nabl argues in the essay ‘Wahrheit und Dichtung’. Instead the key to their validity as works of literature is the manner in which the artists’ experience and imagination merge to form a creative product of broader aesthetic significance. It is this combination which justifies Mann’s reference to Thomas Buddenbrook as ‘der mir mystisch dreifach verwandten Gestalt, dem Vater, Sprössling und Doppelgänger’, revealing that the character was based on his father, as well as being his creation and simultaneously reflecting aspects of his own personality.<sup>110</sup>

In Nabl’s weaker works, such as the posthumously published novel *Vaterhaus* (written 1914/1915, published 1974), the complexity of this relationship between autobiography and fiction is, however, greatly simplified. Despite the theoretical objections outlined above, the fictional world tends to function as a means of reflecting upon aspects of the author’s past. For example, in the case of *Vaterhaus*, the reader has no difficulty identifying Paul Deinegger’s quarrelling parents as a direct reflection of the troubled marriage and eventual separation of Nabl’s own mother and father. Indeed, scenes in the novel often mirror the descriptions of Nabl’s family life outlined in his

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<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Ken Moulden, ‘Die Figuren und ihre Vorbilder’ in *Buddenbrooks-Handbuch*, ed. by Ken Moulden and Gero von Wilpert (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1988), pp. 11-25 (p.11). Even Hasenclever’s *Der Sohn* is in no small part influenced by the author’s troubled relationship with his own father. Cf. Michaels, p. 134.

<sup>110</sup> See T. J. Reed, *Thomas Mann. The Uses of Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 49.

autobiographical writings down to the smallest details. In *Meine Wohnstätten*, for instance, Nabl describes the uneasy atmosphere of family meal-times in his youth and notes:

Das Ende der Mahlzeit, wenn ich, sobald ich zuerst dem Vater und dann die Mutter mit den stets gleichbleibenden Worten “Ich danke fürs Essen” die Hand geküßt hatte, das Zimmer verlassen durfte, wirkte wie eine Erlösung für mich, und das Aufsuchen meines eigenen Zimmers glich einer Flucht in Geborgenheit und Ruhe. (MW, 40)

In Chapter three of *Vaterhaus*, when Paul Deinegger is informed by his father that the family carriage is going to be sold, exactly the same formulation is repeated:

Das Mädchen brachte die Fleischspeise, und nun wurde während des weiteren Mittagessens kein Wort mehr gewechselt. Nach Tisch ging Paul, wie es ihm von frühester Kindheit anerzogen war, und als sei nichts vorgefallen, zuerst auf den Vater, dann auf die Mutter zu, küßte ihnen die Hand und sagte: “Ich danke fürs Essen”.<sup>111</sup>

The close relationship between autobiographical and fictional text exhibited here does not, of course, strip the novel of all literary merit, since the work still constitutes a sensitive portrayal of problematic family life and its impact on an adolescent yearning to escape from it. Nevertheless, the same theme is handled with greater virtuosity in the earlier novel *Ödhof*, which, while still fundamentally influenced by Nabl’s biography, strays further from the author’s actual experiences to render a fictional panorama of greater breadth and dramatic impact, fulfilling more completely Nabl’s later ideal of creative inspiration: ‘Unbewußt muß er [der Dichter] die Begegnungen mit dem Leben in sich aufnehmen, und wenn die Stunde der Erfüllung gekommen ist, dann werden seine

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<sup>111</sup> Franz Nabl, *Vaterhaus* (Graz: Styria, 1976), p. 64.

Geschöpfe, aus gleichsam geheimnisvollem Schacht aufsteigend, Form gewinnen und ihren Lebensweg antreten' (AW I, 27).

### **The Father-Son Conflict in *Ödhof* and *Buddenbrooks*: An Intertextual Reading**

Written in an unpretentious realist style and structured around a series of short episodes, *Ödhof* is set in the last decade of the nineteenth century and treats an extended period in the life of the Arlet family.<sup>112</sup> Beginning and ending with scenes in Vienna in the aftermath of family funerals, the novel has as its main focus events occurring at a country estate deep in the Alpine foothills, which Johannes Arlet, arguably the work's central character, purchases after the death of his wife Marie, the mother of his three sons, Hans, Karl and Heinz. The novel opens with a series of episodes in the city, which introduce a number of important minor characters, while Arlet is off paying an exploratory visit to the property. These include especially Arlet's sister Therese and her husband August Brandeis, as well as Arlet's sensitive brother Heinrich. However, once Arlet has acquired the *Ödhof*, he moves there taking only Heinz, whose brothers are away at boarding school, and his loyal cook, Anna Drasda, with him. Arlet quickly employs a tutor, Dr Meser, to educate Heinz, and an independent-minded young housekeeper Elisabeth Fuchstaler, who, with her illegitimate child and her father's military background,

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<sup>112</sup> It is possible to roughly date the beginning of the plot by references to the price of the estate in the currency 'Gulden', withdrawn from circulation in Austria in 1892, and to the wine which Arlet drinks on arrival in Gramatitz, as being from 'neunundochz'ga Joahr', presumably suggesting a date after 1889. See Nabl, AW III: *Ödhof*, p. 122.

anticipates the protagonist of Schnitzler's novel *Therese. Chronik eines Frauenlebens* (1928).<sup>113</sup>

Once settled at the Ödhof, Johannes has little time for Heinz, partly because he reminds him of his mother, and spends his days hunting on the wooded slopes of the Harasserkogel, a mountain which overlooks the estate. The lonely Heinz, therefore, finds solace in the natural surroundings, whose beauty he learns to love and in his close relationship with Dr Meser, a man whose pedagogical principles stand in contrast to Johannes Arlet's austerity. Soon, however, Arlet is no longer content to spend his days hunting for deer, or tormenting the local villagers and takes Fuchstaler on a tour to the summit of the Harasserkogel, during which he attempts to seduce her. She resists his initial advances but eventually yields to him, after he pays an attractive dancer from a touring circus to spend the night with him at the Ödhof. Outwardly motivated by the wish to protect Heinz from the negative consequences of Arlet's debauched behaviour, she becomes Arlet's mistress underlining her position at the centre of a potentially conflict-laden oedipal character constellation.

By beginning a love affair with Arlet, Fuchstaler enables him to escape the limitations placed on his libido by fatherhood, and heralds the start of an era of unusual harmony on the estate. However, everything changes when Elisabeth later discovers the sexually frustrated adolescent Heinz looking at pornography one night, invites him into her room to talk, and unthinkingly gives herself to him. She confesses her actions the

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<sup>113</sup> Nabl sent Schnitzler a copy of *Ödhof* in autumn 1911, outwardly as a sign of his indebtedness and respect for the older writer and accompanied by an implicit request for Schnitzler's impression of the work. Schnitzler did not reply and their correspondence was abated until 1927. See SNBW, pp. 1263-1264.

next morning, crushing Arlet emotionally and leaves the Ödhof straight away. After a climactic meeting in the forest, where Arlet throws his weaker son to the ground, father and son continue to live alongside each other in a state of radical alienation, made more acute by the absence of Dr Meser. Heinz' beloved tutor has moved away even before Fuchstaler, after an episode where Arlet and Heinz decided to leave the Catholic Church, thus effectively ending Heinz's chances of progressing through the school system, and binding him unwittingly to a life in the shadow of his father. It is at this point in the novel that the Viennese sub-plot is taken up again, when Heinrich Arlet visits the Ödhof. Since tourism is gradually developing in the area, he decides to return to spend a summer in nearby Gramatitz, bringing with him acquaintances from the city. As a result, his nephew Heinz becomes integrated into a new social circle, and falls in love with Lisel Alteneder, whom he plans to marry, and move away with, thereby escaping Johannes' sphere of influence. However, in a final meeting with his father, where he asks forgiveness for his actions, and for permission to marry Lisel, Heinz's dreams are shattered once and for all, and the path is prepared for the novel's catastrophic finale.

Although this synopsis shows that the bulk of the plot takes place at the Ödhof, the addition of a Viennese sub-plot which interpenetrates the main action at key points is vital for a number of reasons. Firstly, it enables the figure of Johannes Arlet to be introduced to the reader from the periphery, through a series of subtle dialogues between more minor characters such as his sister Therese and her husband August, as well as Johannes' brother Heinrich and the Jewish estate agent Konert. This not only results in dramatic suspense as the reader awaits Johannes' first appearance but more importantly

creates a tension between third-party indications of Arlet's powerful individualism and revelations of its destructive effects on those around him which is of paramount importance to the rest of the text.

Secondly, the pause in the forward motion of the narrative created by Arlet's visit to the Ödhof with Konert is also crucial, since it enables Nabl to stress the affinity between Johannes' youngest son Heinz and his brother Heinrich. This connection between nephew and uncle immediately suggested by their shared names is further strengthened by an emotional bond linking Heinrich to Heinz via his love for Heinz's dead mother Marie. Heinrich had courted Marie in her youth, and she had only married Johannes for pragmatic reasons, after misreading Heinrich's apparent hesitation to propose to her. Indeed, the implication is that Heinrich ought to have been Heinz's father but for the cruel workings of fate. This becomes clear in Chapter eight, when Heinrich asks Johannes to give him custody of Heinz, exclaiming: 'Du hast dem Kinde den Körper gegeben – von mir hat es die Seele!' (AW III, 64), and is further compounded by Heinz's response to the prospect of staying with his uncle: 'Es überkam ihn ein süßes Heimatsgefühl [...], als sollte es heute abend beim Schlafengehen ganz ähnlich werden wie früher, wenn die Mutter ihm die Decke bis unters Kinn hinaufzog und ihn auf die Stirn küßte' (AW III, 72). Moreover, the contrast between his actual father Johannes and his alternative father Heinrich, so to speak, is further illustrated by the fact that Heinrich teaches Heinz the magic of Christmas by giving him toys, in stark contrast to Johannes who has no time for childish gifts and had previously discouraged Heinz's mother from giving him anything but essential and useful items needed in everyday life.

Indeed, Heinrich's ability to empathize with Heinz, playing toy soldiers with him on the floor of his apartment, recalls the Christmas scene in book eight of *Buddenbrooks*, where Hanno's uncle Christian shares the pleasure the boy takes in his new puppet theatre, in contrast to the condescending behaviour of the other adults: 'Nur Onkel Christian wußte nichts von diesem Erwachsenen-Hochmut, und seine Freude an dem Puppentheater, als er [...] an Hanno's Platz vorüberschlenderte, unterschied sich gar nicht von der seines Neffen.'<sup>114</sup> This comparison between Hanno and Christian Buddenbrook and Heinz and Heinrich Arlet is further borne out by the artistic sensibilities of the uncles: Christian is a lover of the theatre, and Heinrich a talented amateur painter and musician. In Mann's novel it is, of course, Hanno and his mother Gerda, who are most obviously associated with music, whereas the young Heinz Arlet is not, at least in any direct sense. He does, however, later fall in love with Lisel Altoneder, a precocious musical talent, who is even described by his uncle Heinrich as having nothing but music in her blood: 'Ich glaube, in dem Mädels fließt kein einziger Blutstropfen, der nicht Musik ist!' (AW III, 294). This creates an implicit connection with Hanno, since, while Heinz seeks to flee from the restrictions of his life through the love of a girl with music in her blood, for Hanno music is itself a form of redemptive escape from the pressures of the world. One thinks, for example, of the memorable scene, directly before his death from typhus, where he sits down at the piano, begins to play and loses himself in improvisation, the music becoming a reflection of his inner self,

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<sup>114</sup> See Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks* in Mann, *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Werke – Briefe – Tagebücher*, ed. by Heinrich Detering and others (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002-), I.I: *Buddenbrooks*, ed. by Eckhard Heftrich (2002), p. 592. Henceforth cited in text as MFA I.I with page numbers.

his desires and emotional exhaustion, bringing together both eroticism and death in a manner typical for Mann's fiction:

Die Lösung, die Auflösung, die Erfüllung, die vollkommene Befriedigung brach herein, und mit entzücktem Aufjauchzen entwirrte sich alles zu einem Wohlklang, der in süßem und sehnsüchtigem Ritardando sogleich in einem anderen hinübersank ... es war das Motiv, das erste Motiv, was erklang! Und was nun begann, war ein Fest, ein Triumph, eine zügellose Orgie ebendieser Figur [...]. Es lag etwas Brutales und Stumpfsinniges und zugleich etwas asketisch Religiöses, etwas wie Glaube und Selbstaufgabe in dem fantastischen Kultus dieses Nichts, dieses Stücks Melodie, [...] etwas wie Wille zur Wonne und Untergang in der Gier, mit der die letzte Süßigkeit aus ihr gesogen wurde, bis zur Erschöpfung, bis zum Ekel und Überdruß, bis endlich, endlich in Ermattung nach allen Ausschweifungen ein langes, leises Arpeggio in Moll hinrieselte, um einen Ton emporstieg, sich in Dur auflöste und mit einem wehmütigen Zögern erstarb. (MFA I.I, 827)

In contrast, in Nabl's text the redemptive power of music figures not, as in the previous quotation, in a Wagnerian release from the bonds of individuation, but instead as a form of collective rejuvenation. This is especially obvious when Heinrich begins to play his violin in the Brandeis' drawing room and the reader is given access to his thoughts in a passage of free indirect speech, conveying the effect of music on him, in a manner inviting comparison with Hanno above:

Einzel und zaghaft klangen die Töne von den Saiten auf, und ein jeder war wie eine scheue, ängstliche Frage nach dem nächsten ... Es war aber auch so, als stünde ein Mensch ganz einsam und verlassen in tiefer Nacht. Als sei rings um ihn her, kein anderer Mensch ... kein Licht ... nichts, und seine Seele sehne sich nach einem hellen, warmen Glanz und nach vielen anderen Menschen, die mit ihm froh sein und ihn seiner Einsamkeit entreißen könnten ... Und dann war es auf einmal, als höre er – noch in sehr weiter Ferne – einen Ton aufklingen, gleich einem Ruf, der ihn dorthin lockte, wo seine Sehnsucht war. Und dann einen zweiten Ton ... und noch einen ... und als wiederholten sich diese Töne immer näher und starker, als verfloßen sie ineinander zu heißen, beglückenden Klängen, und mit ihnen käme ein heimliches, fernes Leuchten durch die

Nacht ... und plötzlich stand der einsame Mensch vor einem dunkel-purpurnen Vorhang, und hinter diesem Vorhang waren alle Klänge, war alles Leuchten. Und wie es immer gewaltiger anwuchs und immer höher schwoll, da senkte sich's in ihn hinein wie ein neues Leben mit ungeheurer Kraft – und nun riß er den Vorhang zurück, und all sein Sehnen war befreit und erfüllt in einem klingenden, leuchtenden Wirbel ... (AW III, 290-291)

Instead of pointing towards death, as the term 'ein langes Arpeggio...erstarb' indicates in Mann's passage, music here shows the way towards life, not only for Heinrich, but also for Herr Brandeis who cannot contain his enthusiasm, and jumps up to dance with his wife, thereby bringing vitality back into their stale marriage, not only for the duration of the scene, but also later by providing them with new social contacts, such as the Altoneder family. In both texts, then, music offers a tentative solution to individual crisis, be it in a Dionysian escape from the toils of life ending in the extinction of the self, as it is for Hanno in *Buddenbrooks*, or as an invigorating force enabling reintegration into social life by restoring communal bonds, as it does for Heinrich and Therese in *Ödthof*.

It is striking too that the austere father-figures in both *Buddenbrooks* and *Ödthof*, with the surprising exception of Johann Buddenbrook the elder, are lacking in musical sensibility. Thomas Buddenbrook is unmusical, despite a keen interest in the arts, and is worried by its effects on Hanno, regarding it as a hostile force which might spoil his hopes of turning his son into a strong and pragmatic heir to the family business (MFA I.I, 559). Instead, he prefers to see Hanno undertake physical exercise and eat healthily, despite the boy's dislike of masculine games, and encourages him to spend summers at the seaside, in order to strengthen his constitution, something which actually has the

opposite effect.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, this is symptomatic of the failure of Thomas Buddenbrook's attempts to educate and drill his son into the man he wants him to be. In tormenting Hanno on the firm's hundredth anniversary as he struggles to recite a poem in honour of his father, Thomas only succeeds in cementing his son's decision to never give another public speech (MFA I.I, 532-534). In taking him on his business rounds, in order to show him how to communicate with clients of all social classes, he merely enables Hanno to recognize the extraordinary toll these visitations take on his father:

Aber der kleine Johann sah mehr, als er sehen sollte, und seine Augen, diese schüchternen, goldbraunen, bläulich umschatteten Augen beobachteten zu gut. Er sah nicht nur die sichere Liebenswürdigkeit, die sein Vater auf alle wirken ließ, er sah auch – sah es mit einem seltsamen, quälenden Scharfblick –, wie furchtbar schwer sie zu *machen* war, wie sein Vater nach jeder Visite wortkarger und bleicher, mit geschlossenen Augen, deren Lider sich gerötet hatten, in der Wagenecke lehnte, und mit Entsetzen im Herzen erlebte er es, daß auf der Schwelle des nächsten Hauses eine Maske über ebendieses Gesicht glitt, immer aufs neue eine plötzliche Elastizität in die Bewegungen ebendieses ermüdeten Körpers kam. (MFA I.I, 691)

It is here that the father-son constellation in Nabl's novel diverges most clearly from Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. For the cracks Hanno perceives in the façade of Thomas Buddenbrook's social persona, are scarcely recognizable in Johannes Arlet, at least for the other characters in the book. In fact, with his unshakeable self-confidence, vitalistic opportunism, and anti-clericalism Arlet much more closely resembles a radicalized version of Johann Buddenbrook, than his grandson Thomas. For instance, both Johannes Arlet and Johann Buddenbrook strive to live life in the present and are characterized by a healthy disregard for the past. Early in the novel, the reader is told of Johann

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<sup>115</sup> See MFA I.I, p. 685 and 701.

Buddenbrook: ‘Er stand mit beiden Beinen in der Gegenwart und beschäftigte sich nicht viel mit der Vergangenheit der Familie’ (MFA I.I, 60).<sup>116</sup> A similar sentiment, which derives from Nietzsche’s rejection of the historical sense as a sign of weakness and decadence, returns in hyperbolic form, when Arlet takes Fuchstaler on a hike to the summit of the Harasserkogel and tells her: ‘Die Vergangenheit ist überhaupt nichts wert. Sie besteht gar nicht. [...] Von etwas, was gestern war, ist heute auch nicht ein Atom mehr übrig. Was nicht jeden Tag von neuem wieder geboren wird, ist tot ... verloren für alle Zeit’ (AW III, 208).<sup>117</sup>

Of course, the successive generations of the Buddenbrook family exhibit an ever increasing preoccupation with the past, which acts as a key outward sign of the process of decline traced by Mann’s novel. This decline is, however, accompanied by the ever increasing sensitivity of characters in each new generation, combined with an enhanced insight into the nature of the world around them. Already present in Thomas, this culminates in Hanno, and is manifest in his keen recognition of the draining effects of his father’s business life despite the latter’s attempts to conceal them. Unfortunately, this heightened perception results not only in creativity and compassion but in pain and disgust, in a manner which anticipates both Mann’s comments on the connection between ‘Erkenntnis’ and ‘Schmerz’ in ‘Bilse und Ich’, and Tonio Kröger’s ‘Erkenntnisekel’ and

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<sup>116</sup> Also quoted by Reed, p. 50.

<sup>117</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* [1873] in Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967-), Abt III, Bd. I: *Die Geburt der Tragödie; Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I-III (1872-1874)*, pp. 241-242: ‘Es gibt einen Grad, Historie zu treiben, und eine Schätzung derselben, bei der das Leben verkümmert und entartet: ein Phänomen, welches an merkwürdigen Symptomen unserer Zeit sich zur Erfahrung zu bringen ebenso notwendig ist, als es schmerzlich sein mag.’ On this point in relation to *Buddenbrooks* see also Reed, p. 50.

ultimately leaves Hanno unfit for survival in the real world.<sup>118</sup> This form of painful ‘Erkenntnis’ is thoroughly lacking in his grandfather Johann, and to an even more extreme degree in Johannes Arlet, who appears convinced, at least on the surface, that individual will alone makes man’s fortune, rather than the conditions around him, and champions a notion of inherited ‘Lebensberechtigung’ as the key to success in life:

Wer das nicht hat, dieses Gefühl der Lebensberechtigung vor sich selbst, der muß früher oder später zugrunde gehen. Geistig und körperlich. Da hilft kein Gott ... Geben kann man dieses Gefühl natürlich keinem Menschen. Das muß er aus sich selbst heraus haben. Aber dafür kann es ihm auch niemand wegnehmen. (AW III, 524)

However, as the events of Nabl’s novel eventually reveal, Arlet’s lack of ‘Erkenntnis’ is far from the virtue it might initially appear and actually plays a major part in precipitating the crisis of the work’s ending. This is made explicit by Heinrich Arlet’s speculation following Johannes untimely death, that powerful will is nothing without recognition of its effects: “‘Was nützt der eigene Wille, wenn einem die Erkenntnis des Willens fehlt’” (AW III, 558).

Another key contrast between Thomas Buddenbrook and Johannes Arlet is that while Thomas only advocates the virtues of physical exertion, masculinity, and the benefits of the natural environment and is himself decidedly sickly, Arlet’s lifestyle is dominated by manly pastimes and tests of strength. He has a powerful build, is an avid

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<sup>118</sup> See Thomas Mann, *Tönio Kröger* [1903] in Mann, *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Werke – Briefe – Tagebücher*, ed. by Heinrich Detering and others (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002-), II.I: *Frühe Erzählungen, 1893-1912*, ed. by Terence J. Reed (2004), p. 276: ‘Es gibt etwas, was ich Erkenntnisekel nenne, Lisaweta: Der Zustand, in dem es dem Menschen genügt, eine Sache zu durchschauen, um sich bereits zum Sterben angewidert (und durchaus nicht versöhnlich gestimmt) zu fühlen, – der Fall Hamlets, des Dänen, dieses typischen Literaten.’

hunter, climbs mountains with ease and prides himself on his ability to consume astonishing amounts of alcohol. Arlet is, of course, not entirely alone in this, since even comparatively weaker male characters in *Ödhof* are capable of athleticism. For example, the vegetarian and teetotal tutor Dr Meser exercises in his room every morning before bathing in cold water, and takes Heinz on long walks in the hills; Arlet's brother, Heinrich, is a proficient mountaineer, as is Heinz later in the text.<sup>119</sup> Yet, hidden beneath their shared physical prowess and common affinity for the natural world, are crucial differences in emphasis which separate Arlet fundamentally from Meser, Heinrich and most obviously his son Heinz.

Johannes Arlet turns to nature in order to possess it, rule over it, and subdue it to his own strong will. In Chapter 21, the narrator reproduces an excerpt from a series of notes Johannes has written in answer to the questions of life in direct quotation. This aphorism is identified as the root of his decision to leave the city and settle in the countryside. Here, Johannes stresses his belief in the necessity of physical freedom ('körperliche Freiheit'), and emphasizes the importance of owning and controlling one's own land. His vocabulary comes close to echoing the rhetoric of anti-urban *Heimatkunst*:

Auf der Erde muß der Mensch stehen, und die Erde, auf der er steht, muß sein eigen sein, darf ihm von keinem zweiten streitig gemacht werden. Eine Wiese muß man haben, darauf im Sommer das Gras tiefblaue Inseln blühender Salbei umweht und umwohrt gleich einer Flut, und über die Wiese muß man hinschreiten dürfen, unbekümmert um die Halme und Blüten, die der Fußtritt an die Erde anpreßt. (AW III, 122-123)

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<sup>119</sup> The capacity for physical exercise and the immersion in nature act as markers of positive character association in the novel. Other male characters portrayed in a less than flattering light, such as Brandeis or the portly adolescent Herr Körner, are notably less athletic.

However, there is a notable difference here to the evocations of the organic harmony between farmer and his ‘Scholle’, exemplified for instance by Peter Rosegger’s *Jakob der Letzte*, where the protagonist experiences the harvest as a sacred ritual:

Wenn er als Sämann über die Schollen schritt und die Körner ausstreute in das Erdreich, da geschah es in ernster, fast feierlicher Weise, als beginge er eine heilige Handlung. Und dann begann sich vor seinen Augen allmählich das Wunder der göttlichen Liebe zu vollziehen.<sup>120</sup>

In Nabl’s novel, Arlet is not a farmer, has no generational ties to the land and no interest in cultivating crops. Instead, he sees land ownership as a means by which he can exercise his omnipotent fantasies undisturbed by society. This is clear from the image of carelessly crushing the meadow’s blossom and grass under his feet, and placed beyond all doubt when he continues with a phallic fantasy about his sovereignty over the pine trees in his ideal forest:

Rund um die Wiese mit dem Bache aber soll sich ein Wald ziehen, allmählich ansteigend zur Berghöhe, und zwar ein Wald von Tannen- und Fichtenbäumen. Denn nur diese sind die Bäume eines einzigen, starken Willens, der zu einem einzigen, stolzgeraden Stamme aufschießt, indessen alles Laubholz und auch die Föhre sich zu hohler Krone verästelt, wie von hundert eitlen Launen und Schwächen auseinandergetrieben. – Und die Bäume diese Waldes müssen einem sein wie Untertanen, ja wie Leibeigene, deren Leben und Tod man beschließen kann nach freier Willkür. Man kann sie aufwachsen lassen in ungestörtem Frieden, aber wenn man einen Groll im Herzen hat, dann kann man die Axt einsenken mit schwerem Hieb in ihren Stamm. (AW III, 123)<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See Peter Rosegger, *Ausgewählte Werke*, 4 vols, ed. by Kurt Eigl (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, n.d.), IV: *Jakob der Letzte, Heidepeters Gabriel*, p. 170. Henceforth cited in text as RW IV with page numbers.

<sup>121</sup> The term ‘phallic fantasy’ is indebted to Werner Michler’s discussion of the novel here. See Michler, p. 266.

This vision of man's dominance over the natural world strikingly recalls a passage from Nabl's earlier story 'Charakter' (1910), where the first-person narrator, like Arlet also the owner of a large forested estate, exclaims:

Wenn ich über eigenen Grund und Boden durch meinen Wald gehe, dann habe ich ein Königsgefühl. Alle Stämme, die rings um mich aufragen von der Wurzel bis zur Krone, sind mein Eigentum, und weil ich sie so ganz genau kenne, daß sie mir zu mitlebenden Geschöpfen geworden sind, erscheinen sie mir als Menschen, als meine Untertanen. Ich liebe sie, aber wenn ich wollte, könnte ich sie auch zu Boden schlagen, und niemand dürfte dazwischen treten, denn ich bin der Herr. Ich habe Macht über Leben und Sterben. [...] Denn ich habe das Herrengefühl in mir. Ein Gefühl, als ob es hier auf meinem Grund und Boden, in meinem Wald, keine Richter über mir gäbe. (FE, 35-36)

Furthermore, the satisfaction resulting from the protagonists' imagined power and control over the natural world evident in both of these quotations also links them to Anton Krist's sterile flower garden in 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist', and even to Dr Schiermayer's underground chicken coop in the later novella *Der Tag der Erkenntnis*.<sup>122</sup> All of these examples are connected by the desire to impose individual will on an increasingly hostile and unpredictable outside world, and thus might be seen to derive from broadly the same impulse which motivated the Stifterian idylls, with which Nabl's later writing has often been associated.<sup>123</sup> However, even though more recent scholarship has begun to illustrate the cracks behind the serene façade of Stifter's prose, it is still correct to note that the vision of nature revealed by Johannes Arlet, as well as by Krist, Schiermayer and Erich, the narrator-protagonist of 'Charakter', is both more exaggerated and ultimately, as we

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<sup>122</sup> See also Chapter 1 above and Chapter 4 below.

<sup>123</sup> See Elisabeth Tallner, 'Franz Nabl's Familienromane' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Prague, 1940), p. 15.

shall see, revealed to be more obviously flawed in the course of the texts, than in Stifter's work. Nevertheless, Arlet's approach to the natural world is not the only viable view offered by *Ödhof*, since it is balanced by his son's very different manner of experiencing nature.

Indeed, in direct contrast to his father, Heinz is comforted by the meadows, woods and rocky outcrops surrounding the *Ödhof*, in a manner which recalls Hanno's liberating experience of the sea in *Buddenbrooks*.<sup>124</sup> In Chapter 21, following on from the description of Arlet's attitude to nature, we are shown how Heinz encounters the natural world as a harmonious extension of the self, and a substitute for the comfort missing from his lonely existence:

Auf einmal aber waren die Wiese und der Wald mit den Felsen dem kleinen Heinz unendlich nahe. Und alles, was er sah, wurde plötzlich lebendig. Nicht wie ein Mensch, nein, wie ein viel besseres schöneres Wesen. Es kam auf ihn zu, so als wolle es sich in ihn hineinsenken, er sah es zum erstenmal in seinem Leben, aber es war ihm nicht fremd. Denn er wußte klar und deutlich, daß er es kennenlernen und sich zu eigen machen durfte. Diese Wiese war ja sein, mit allem Gras und allen Blüten, mit allen Tieren, die sie in ihren Halmen, ihrer Erde barg. (AW III, 125)

This contrast is further underlined by the manner in which Arlet personifies nature, seeing the trees as his subjects, whereas Heinz, a child starved of meaningful human contact, regards his natural surroundings as more, and indeed better, than a human companion.

Moreover, the natural imagery employed in the novel also serves to connect Arlet with strength and vitality by association with the towering fir trees of the Alpine forest

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. MFA I.I, p. 696.

and his son Heinz with weakness by linking him to the meadows, and above all their flowers and blossom.<sup>125</sup> This is already evident in the passage quoted above, but is demonstrated beyond any doubt soon afterwards, when Heinz sees his first Alpine meadow in bloom (AW III, 142-144). In this short section, variations of the word blossom occur with striking regularity: ‘die Wiese war ein einziges, weites Blühen [...]. Draus ragte der Salbei hervor mit seinen leuchtendblauen Blütenkielen [...] und dazwischen standen die Orchideen [...]. Ihre Blüten schienen mit künstlich bereiteter Farbe bemalt zu sein’ (AW III, 142).

Indeed, by firmly linking Heinz to the image of ‘Blüte’, Nabl symbolically enacts the conflict between father and son, brother and siblings introduced at the start of the novel through Therese’s evocation of Johannes as a man who apparently thrives on ‘das Morden der Lebensblüte’ (AW III, 15). This image returns in Arlet’s wish to stride out over his meadows crushing the blossom under his feet, and once again when he strikes out at the blossoming autumn crocus buds during his ascent of the Harasserkogel with Elisabeth Fuchstaler: ‘Dabei schlug er ein paar Herbstzeitlosen die Blütenköpfe ab. [...] “Das Zeug hat kein Leben und keine Farbe”’ (AW III, 204). The connection to Heinz here is demonstrated when the narrator notes immediately before the incident: ‘Der Weg führte über jenen Wiesenhang, dessen Blüte den kleinen Heinz einst so entzückt hat’ (AW III, 203).

Strikingly the presence of Elisabeth Fuchstaler also ties these scenes together. A central focus of the latter scene, she also steps into view in the former scene as Heinz

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<sup>125</sup> See also Michler, p. 267.

laments the death of his mother, which has left him without a companion to share the joys of nature with: ‘Heinz Arlet wurde ruhig und froh. Denn er fühlte, daß auch hier, in seiner nächsten Nähe, ein Mensch war, dem er seine Blumen schenken konnte’ (AW III, 144). Seeing Elisabeth, Heinz explicitly recognizes her as a potential substitute, underlining her position at the centre of an oedipal character constellation, which later brings the conflict between Heinz and his father to its climax. It is only after Fuchstaler sleeps with Heinz that Arlet is moved to destroy his son’s burgeoning aspirations in the same way as he obliterates the blooming flowers.

The important connection between patriarchal conflict and oedipal desire in Nabl’s *Ödhof* finds no correlation in *Buddenbrooks*, and instead seems to anticipate the treatment of the theme in Expressionist texts, such as Arnolt Bronnen’s *Vatermord*, where the oedipal constellation is radicalized and the son Walter sleeps with his real mother before stabbing his father. The motif also occurs in a less direct form in Sorge’s *Der Bettler*, where the protagonist poisons his insane father, accidentally killing his beloved mother in the process. It is also hinted at in Hasenclever’s *Der Sohn*, where the hero sleeps with his widowed father’s maid, depicting it as a welcome betrayal of patriarchal authority: ‘Welche Wollust, ihn zu betrügen! Als ich sie gestern in seinem Zimmer küßte, wie genoß ich dieses Glück.’<sup>126</sup> Yet Nabl’s novel is completely devoid of

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<sup>126</sup> Walter Hasenclever, *Der Sohn* in Hasenclever, *Sämtliche Werke*, 5 vols, ed. by Dieter Breuer and Bernd Witte (Mainz: v. Hase & Köhler, 1990-1997), II.I: *Stücke bis 1924* (1992), pp. 253. The hero’s companion ‘Der Freund’ also lends support to this view, urging the son to sleep with the maid and remarking: ‘Auch deine Mutter war eine Frau wie sie. Du wirst ihr Kind sein’, p. 247. For a reading of oedipal conflict in German Expressionism in light of Lacanian psychoanalysis see Richard William Sheppard, ‘Unholy Families: The Oedipal Psychopathology of Four Expressionist Ich-Dramen’, *Orbis Litterarum*, 41 (1986), 355-383.

the revolutionary pathos of these Expressionist plays. Heinz's sexual encounter with Fuchstaler is an unconsidered attempt to escape the alienation of his youth, which merely succeeds in plunging him deeper into emotional and physical isolation. Indeed, confrontation with Arlet, results not in the overthrowing of the older generation, but rather in fear, submission and eventually to begging for forgiveness.

Directly after Fuchstaler's revelation of their encounter to Arlet, Heinz and Arlet meet in a clearing in the woods. Heinz yells at his father in desperation, before Arlet shakes him by the lapels and tosses him to the ground, where he remains lying prostrate, almost in the form of the cross: 'Heinz Arlet aber blieb liegen, so wie er gefallen war. Mit dem Gesicht und der Brust auf der feuchten Erde, die Arme beinahe in Kreuzesform vom Körper weggestreckt. Und so lag er, die Finger ins Gras gekrallt, regungslos wohl eine Stunde lang' (AW III, 453). Of course, as critics have correctly suggested the anti-clerical rhetoric of the novel means that the religious overtones of Heinz's body position serve to underline his weakness.<sup>127</sup> However, there is also a suggestion that Heinz is a sacrificial victim of his almost godlike father here, something echoed by his later plea for forgiveness: 'Vater! ... Verzeih mir alles, was ich dir getan hab' (AW III, 536). From an early stage in the novel, the feeling that he is an innocent victim awakens in Heinz, motivated by his father's insistence on killing every animal within his reach:

Sein Vater tötete jedes Tier, jeden Käfer und jede Schnecke ... jede Fliege ... alles, alles war nutzloses und schädliches Gezücht. Und Heinz glaubte ihm, mußte ihm glauben, denn er war der Vater. Aber ein kalter Schauer kroch über seine Freude an dem Wald und an den Wiesen. Unter jedem Stein, jedem Blatt ... hinter jeder Baumwurzel fürchtete er

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<sup>127</sup> See Michler, p. 268.

einen lauerten Feind. [...] Das bittere Gefühl eines schuldlos Verfolgten erwachte in ihm. (AW III, 198)

Indeed, this feeling of being pursued is symbolically underlined when, after realizing that he is unable to ever truly escape his father's sphere of influence, Heinz commits suicide by shooting himself in the hunting shelter high up on the Harasserkogel, where Arlet had first attempted to seduce Fuchstaler. It is clear that he is a particularly unfortunate victim of Arlet's subjugating will, even though the suicide note he has sent to his uncle Heinrich attempts to relativize his father's guilt by stating: 'Am Ende trägt er ja nicht allein die Schuld. Sowenig wie ich selbst. Die eigentliche Schuld muß irgendwo anders liegen. Gar nicht in uns selbst' (AW III, 539). This statement, in fact, leads back to Arlet's drunken evocation of man as an animal hunted by fate, earlier in the text, which is vital to the novel's interpretation:

Glauben sie, weil wir Menschen meist eines natürlichen Todes sterben, sind wir weniger verfolgt? ... Wer sagt ihnen denn, daß unsere Tode natürlich sind? ... Wer sagt ihnen denn, ob es nicht über uns und über der ganzen Erde irgendwelche große, riesenhafte Geschöpfe gibt, die hinter uns her sind, wie wir hier unten hinter den Tieren? ... Wir haben unsere Hand und in der Hand ein Gewehr ... oder ein Messer! ... Die haben schrecklichere Waffen! ... Krankheit! ... Elend! ... Und das Schicksal! (AW III, 328)

This quotation undermines the tempting interpretation of Arlet as a vulgarized Nietzschean 'Kraftmensch', since it reveals that rather than acting with noble disregard for received values and strong-willed indifference, his lifestyle with its tests of strength and submission of the people and things around him is the result of deep-seated

existential fear.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, it functions as a conclusive expression of Arlet's closely guarded vulnerability, already hinted at in a number of earlier passages of the text. For example, in the midst of the first confrontation between Heinrich and Johannes, where the former asks for custody of Heinz on the basis of the strong mutual emotional attachment he shared with Johannes' wife, Johannes responds to Heinrich's assertion that Marie had loved him and hated her husband by sitting down at his desk in order to hide his trembling legs: 'Eine Zeitlang blieb es still zwischen ihnen. Dann ging Johannes an den Schreibtisch und setzte sich nieder. Er wollte den Bruder nicht merken lassen, daß seine Beine zitterten' (AW III, 64). Moreover, signs of Arlet's impotence when faced by the manifestations of fate are also evident in his discussion with Fuchstaler shortly before she becomes his lover, which reveals the incompatibility of his reluctant fatherhood and the radical autonomy of his 'Lebensphilosophie':

Plötzlich warf er die Hände hoch und schlug die geballten Fäuste über seinem Kopf gegen die kaltfeuchte Steinwand. Wie ein Mensch, der gegen ein unüberwindliches Hindernis antobt. Und sein ganzer Groll, seine ganze Verzweiflung drängte sich in einen furchtbaren, dumpf-gurgelnden Schrei. "Warum muß ich der Sklave meines Kindes sein." (AW III, 274)

Seen in this context, Arlet cannot and does not stand above those around him, and ultimately fails in his quest for absolute individualism. Scarred by the loss of Fuchstaler whom he loved, he destroys first Heinz and then himself. His eventual demise is bitterly

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<sup>128</sup> For example, Erwin Ackerknecht, in the first monograph on Nabl's work, refers to Arlet as 'ein verhinderter "Übermensch" im Sinne Nietzsches.' See Ackerknecht, *Franz Nabl. Der Weg eines deutschen Dichters*, p. 25. This view, though often without explicit reference to Nietzsche, recurs frequently in the history of the novel's reception. See Noelle, pp. 265-271.

ironic: he unwittingly kills himself by contracting blood-poisoning, after chopping off his own finger to prove to the locals in a run-down inn the absolute strength of his will. In light of this, Arlet's espousals of the value of 'Willenskraft' and 'Lebensberechtigung' are unmasked as hollow maxims, incompatible with the realities of social existence.

Yet the novel offers little in the way of a positive alternative: the distanced self-satisfaction of Brandeis, who retires to bed after the funerals which frame the plot of the book, pleased that he has no real part in the unhappiness of those around him, is equally bleak. Even the brief promise that Dr Meser might find contentment through marriage to Fuchstaler must ultimately fail, since she is unable to believe in the possibility of happiness in anything other than renunciation, informing her suitor: "Es gibt Menschen, die über die Zufriedenheit der Entsagung nicht hinausstreben dürfen. Sobald sie ihre Hand nach irgendeinem besseren Glück ausstrecken, bringen sie sich und andere ins Elend" (AW III, 552). Yet this decision is not compensated by arousing ethical admiration for the character in the manner which the reader responds to Stifter's 'Kalkstein' (1853) or Ferdinand von Saar's *Innocens* (1866). It is instead the conclusion of a woman wearied by the disappointments of life, and unable to trust her ability to shape her own destiny.

Of course, the most attractive response to the challenges posed by the grim Darwinian universe of Nabl's *Ödhof* is Heinrich Arlet's attempt to save both Heinz and Therese through compassion and in the latter case the restorative powers of art. However, the mild-mannered and sensitive Heinrich is neither able to protect Heinz from Johannes, nor to avert his nephew's suicide. Furthermore, although the novel ends before the reader

can establish whether his positive influence on Therese will continue, the contrast between Heinrich and Johannes' eldest son Karl drawn in the penultimate scene indicates that art is, at best, a personal solution. Karl, who despite a life-long hatred of his father has clearly inherited the cool practical sense which had characterized Johannes at the outset of the novel, has returned to the Ödhof with his father on his deathbed, with the sole intention of selling the estate once he has exploited its rich timber assets. When Heinrich asks his nephew if he might be allowed to keep a copy of the portrait of Marie from Arlet's office, Karl agrees remarking: "Wenn dir das Bild so wertvoll ist, machst du mir vielleicht die Freude und behältst es überhaupt! [...] Mein Gott – die Malerei als solche hat ja kein besonderes Interesse für mich" (AW III, 557). Karl's keen business acumen, yet lack of aesthetic sensibility suggests that Arlet's dispassionate rationalism and vitality not only survives him, but will also remain at least as dominant in the future. Thus, unlike *Buddenbrooks*, the novel ends not with the extinction of a dynasty through gradual decline balanced by associated aesthetic and emotional refinement, but returns full circle to the beginning of the process, underlined structurally by the repetition of the same situation in the opening and closing scenes of the text: Brandeis' return from an Arlet family funeral. Arlet's destruction of himself and his family achieves nothing, except to illustrate the destructive potential of human relationships.

## Conclusion

Heralded by the conservative press on publication as a refreshing break with contemporary modernist fiction, only to later fall into obscurity, *Ödhof* warrants rehabilitation for almost the opposite reason. Nabl's novel - as I have argued in this chapter - is a compelling work which exhibits a complex, but nonetheless distinct relationship to the literary and cultural environment in which it was written. It draws on and modifies character constellations found in Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, and equally takes up issues such as the role of art and life, expressed through the shared motif of music, evident in Mann's novel. However, in placing the antagonism between Johannes and Heinz Arlet at the centre of the narrative, rather than focusing on a sequence of successive generations, and by linking this to oedipal desire, Nabl's treatment of patriarchal conflict is given an emphasis typical of the Expressionist decade in which the novel first appeared. Yet Nabl's work also differs clearly from Expressionism through its realist style, lack of revolutionary pathos and focus on the rural environment. Often mistaken for a *Heimat* novel on the basis of the latter, its evocation of the countryside, and the symbolic fabric of its natural imagery, though, shares little with the *Heimat* genre's conventions and rhetoric.<sup>129</sup> Instead, the devastation of the novel's ending exhibits a much closer affinity to the broader tradition of Austrian texts, which reflect critically on provincial life, most notably traced by W. G. Sebald.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, the

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<sup>129</sup> For a detailed treatment of this issue see Chapter 4 below.

<sup>130</sup> See the essays in W. G. Sebald, *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* and *Unheimliche Heimat*.

manner of this devastation, with the breakdown of family relations to the point of anguish, destitution, and suicide not only links *Ödhof* thematically to both Nabl's earliest fiction and his next major novel, *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, but also firmly connects it to another often unrecognized, but equally major preoccupation of modern Austrian literature: the crisis of family.

## Chapter 3

### Graves of the Living: Franz Nabl's *Die Ortliebschen Frauen* and the Crisis of the Family in Austrian Literature

#### Introduction: *Das Grab des Lebendigen* and the Critics

After his father's death in 1913, Nabl left Vienna, taking up residence with his wife in nearby Baden.<sup>131</sup> Here, with the newfound financial security provided by a sizeable inheritance, he devoted himself to writing with renewed vigour, producing his third novel, *Vaterhaus*, and shortly afterwards his fourth, *Das Grab des Lebendigen. Eine Studie aus dem kleinbürgerlichen Leben*.<sup>132</sup> In *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, Nabl departs

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<sup>131</sup> Nabl had originally moved back to Vienna from Enzesfeld an der Triesting in 1911 because of his father's illness. From 1913 onwards, the Nabls remained in Baden bei Wien until, in 1924, changed financial circumstances forced them to move to Graz, where Nabl took up a post at the *Neues Grazer Tagblatt*. See MW, p. 85 and pp. 101-119.

<sup>132</sup> The novel grew out of an earlier manuscript containing the beginnings of a novella called *Der Wahn der Ortliebschen Frauen*. Initially entitled *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, the novel was re-issued in 1936 by Schünemann in Bremen under the more neutral title *Die Ortliebschen Frauen*. Handke believed that this change was forced by the Nazis and interpreted it as evidence of Nabl's strained relationship with National Socialism. See Handke, 'Franz Nabls Größe und Kleinlichkeit', p. 34. However, the change was actually made on the advice of Nabl's publisher, who feared difficulties in marketing the new edition given the gloomy negativity implied by the title in an era where the literary market was dominated by Nazi cultural politics. See MW, p. 103 and later also Herbert Arlt, 'Franz Nabl: Sprache, Titel, Figuren, Motive' in *Sein und Schein – Traum und Wirklichkeit. Zur Poetik österreichischer Schriftsteller im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Herbert Arlt and Manfred Diersch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 103-120 (pp. 116-118). Arlt accuses Nabl of intentionally misrepresenting the reason for the change of title to Handke. Yet this accusation is purely speculative and actually reveals Arlt's ignorance of Nabl's open explanation for the change in *Meine Wohnstätten*, some 19 years earlier.

from the predominantly autobiographical models employed in his earlier fiction, but remains with the dominant theme of unhappy family life, already familiar to readers from *Ödhof*. This time, however, he switches the focus of his text to the city, probing the pathological structures at work in a fictional petty-bourgeois family living in early twentieth-century Vienna.

This decision had a significant impact on the contemporary reception of the novel. The lack of an obvious rural setting for most of the plot, combined with the Naturalist overtones of the term ‘Studie’ in the sub-title, made it difficult for the conservative press to greet the text with the same enthusiasm as *Ödhof*. For example, in a joint review by Viktor Wall and the pan-German *Heimat* writer Karl Bienenstein, *Das Grab des Lebendigen* was first contrasted negatively with its predecessor and then disparaged:

Dort eine selbstgefällige, selbstherrliche Natur mit immerhin großzügigen, wenn auch verkommenen Ansätzen, hier aber eine hysterisch werdende Jungfer [...]. Welch eine Fülle endloser, sich um die größten Nichtigkeiten drehender, fort wiederholter, vom Anfang bis zum Ende belangloser Wechselgespräche! Was für kleinliche Zänkereien nebensächlicher Alltagsweiber 576 eng bedruckte Seiten hindurch!<sup>133</sup>

There were still, of course, more positive responses to the novel. Yet many of these merely repeated the preconceived views established by earlier reviewers of Nabl’s writing, applying them eagerly to this new work without registering differences in setting or focus. Thus, the text was once again set against the alleged effeminacy associated implicitly with Jung-Wien: ‘Der Roman ist ein echter Wiener Roman und weist alle

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<sup>133</sup> Viktor Wall and Karl Bienenstein, ‘Über Franz Nabl’s Erzählkunst’, *Donauland*, 3 (1920), 1035-1038 (p. 1037). Quoted by Noelle, pp. 287-288.

Vorzüge derselben auf bei glücklicher Vermeidung der sonst ihm eigentümlichen, selbstgefälligen Koketterie und Selbstauflösung.<sup>134</sup> In a similar fashion, the tenacious stereotype of Nabl's literary-historical isolation also reappeared, as Bernhard Flemes' discussion of the text demonstrates: 'Franz Nabl steht in seinen Büchern abseits jeder Richtung. [...] Seine Schaffensweise ist weder traditionell noch modern.'<sup>135</sup> When contemporary critics did attempt to locate *Das Grab des Lebendigen* in literary history, they often invoked the tradition of French Naturalism, citing Zola or Flaubert as possible antecedents.<sup>136</sup> However, such comparisons always remained superficial, deriving more from the expectations raised by the text's sub-title, 'eine Studie', than from a close reading of the text.

Although in more recent times the novel has been increasingly regarded as Nabl's most important work, even attracting praise from prominent commentators, such as Peter Handke and Martin Walser, the vagueness surrounding its literary-historical status has yet to be satisfactorily resolved.<sup>137</sup> In fact, the scholarship published on the novel remains so limited, even in comparison to the sparse research on Nabl's other works, that no

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<sup>134</sup> Josef Frank, *Wiener Abendpost* (6 September 1917).

<sup>135</sup> Bernhard Flemes, 'Franz Nabl', *Hamburger Nachrichten* (28 November 1917).

<sup>136</sup> For examples see Josef Thummerer, 'Nabls neuer Roman', *Deutsche Arbeit* (January 1918) and Adelbert Muhr, 'Franz Nabl', *Der Merkur* (15 December 1918).

<sup>137</sup> See Handke, 'Franz Nabls Größe und Kleinlichkeit', p. 32 and Martin Walser, "Die Ortliebschen Frauen". Über die erste Bekanntschaft mit Franz Nabl', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (11 March 1994). Walser won the 'Franz-Nabl-Preis der Stadt Graz' in 1994 and recommended *Das Grab des Lebendigen* to his publisher Suhrkamp, enthusing 'Dass er so spannend ist, das ist das schlimmste an diesem Roman. Man möchte schneller lesen können'.

sustained attempt to interpret the novel in its literary-historical context exists.<sup>138</sup> This omission – as I shall argue in this chapter – is both surprising and unfortunate, since *Das Grab des Lebendigen* actually occupies a privileged position in an often undervalued body of Austrian writing, much of it realist, which engages critically with the multifaceted problems of family life. By analysing the novel against the background of this neglected strand of Austrian literary history, I aim to demonstrate that *Das Grab des Lebendigen* deserves renewed appreciation and critical scrutiny. For the novel is – I shall contend – not only a major realist exploration of domestic crisis, whose theme resonates strongly in contemporary Austrian culture, but also a work which prompts us to rethink some of the stereotypical and distorting assumptions underlying conventional narratives of the country’s literary past.

### **Unhappy Families: Fritzl, Nabl and the Austrian Canon**

At first sight, the strong concern with unhappy domestic life in Austrian literature appears unremarkable. After all, as Max Horkheimer argued in ‘Autorität und Familie’ (1936), family crisis is perhaps the literary theme par excellence in bourgeois Western culture.<sup>139</sup>

Yet in light of the horrific high-profile cases of domestic abuse and captivity which taint

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<sup>138</sup> The only noteworthy scholarly articles on the novel are Himmel, ‘Franz Nabls Roman „Die Ortliebschen Frauen”’ and Herbert Herzmann, ‘Franz Nabls *Die Ortliebschen Frauen* und das österreichische “Urerlebnis”’, *Modern Austrian Literature*, 21/1 (1988), 83-104. The former is essentially a detailed text-based (‘werkimmanent’) analysis, the latter reads the text in light of Karl Popper’s sociological theory, arguing, not always convincingly, that the novel both responds to and implicitly thematizes political and social upheavals related to the gradual disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy.

<sup>139</sup> See Max Horkheimer, ‘Autorität und Familie’ in *Kritische Theorie. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Alfred Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1968), pp. 277-360 (p. 357).

its recent past, the crisis of the family has a special and uncomfortable presence in modern-day Austria. At the time of writing, it is but six years since Natascha Kampusch's escape after eight years imprisoned in the basement of a house in Lower Austrian Strassdorf by her kidnapper Wolfgang Priklopil. It is also only four years since the alarming case of Josef Fritzl came to light. Fritzl, it will be remembered, kept his daughter Elisabeth captive in a furnished, soundproofed dungeon in the cellar of the family home in Amstetten for twenty-four years, during which she bore him seven children as the result of his sexual abuse. Even though Fritzl adopted three of these, improbably claiming that they were foundlings left at his doorstep, and even applied for and gained planning permission for the cellar complex, neither neighbours nor the local authorities noticed anything untoward. Writing in the immediate aftermath of Amstetten, Ritchie Robertson pointed out a surprising number of fictional antecedents in Austrian literature, engaging with some of the case's key underlying themes, such as abusive family relationships and patriarchal tyranny. Fritzl, Robertson argued, 'existed in literature before he existed in life'.<sup>140</sup>

If this can be applied to any Austrian text, then to Nabl's *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, where one of the central characters, Walter Ortlieb, is emotionally tyrannized and eventually locked up in a furnished dungeon beneath the family home by his insane sister Josefine. Surprisingly though this is not the only example of domestic captivity in Austrian fiction. Adalbert Stifter's story 'Turmalin' (1853), discussed in

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<sup>140</sup> See Ritchie Robertson, 'Commentary: Graves of the living', *Times Literary Supplement* (16 May 2008), 14-15.

some detail below, also features a father who locks up his daughter in a cellar apartment. These two examples are all the more striking, given the outdated but entrenched narrative of Austrian literary development, which contrasts Austrian realist fiction with the mainstream European tradition of critical realism dominant in France, England and Scandinavia, associating the former with uncomplicated depictions of Biedermeier domestic life.<sup>141</sup> With realist texts, such as those by Stifter and Nabl, almost foreshadowing the real-life horrors of the Kampusch and Fritzl cases, it seems necessary to question these scholarly myths, and look more closely at the treatment of unhappy families in the Austrian canon.

An attentive survey of Austrian literary history reveals examples of awful family life in surprising places. Tyrannical fathers and husbands, for example, populate even the supposedly jolly comedies of the Viennese popular theatre. The most famous instance is perhaps Ferdinand Raimund's 'Zauberstück' *Der Alpenkönig und der Menschenfeind* (1828), where the paranoid patriarch Rappelkopf torments his wife and daughter with his violent outbursts until the 'Alpenkönig' cures him of his misanthropy by showing him his behaviour acted out by a double. The work of Johann Nestroy, though, also features insufferable patriarchs: Gundlhuber in *Eine Wohnung ist zu vermiethen in der Stadt*

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<sup>141</sup> See 'Habsburgische Heimatliteratur' in Claudio Magris, *Der habsburgische Mythos in der österreichischen Literatur* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1966), pp. 135-166. More recently, Karlheinz Rossbacher's study *Literatur und Liberalismus: Zur Kultur der Ringstraßenzeit in Wien* (Vienna: J&V Edition, 1992) has made a major contribution to correcting these misconceptions.

(1837)<sup>142</sup> and Herr von Hornissl in *Nur Ruhe!* (1843) are but two of the worst among many.<sup>143</sup> Later in the century, troubled family life became a central focus of the realistic dramas of Ludwig Anzengruber. This is true of *Der Meineidbauer* and, above all, of *Das vierte Gebot* (1877), which mounts a sustained attack on the Catholic idealization of the family, revealing how uncritical adherence to the sanctity of parental authority has disastrous consequences for the next generation. Anzengruber's play indicates that this problem transcends social class boundaries, demonstrating how both the affluent landowner Anton Hutterer and the alcoholic wood-turner Schalanter ruin their offspring's lives.<sup>144</sup> The critical thrust of Anzengruber's work is, as we shall see, also a major element in Nabl's portrayal of the family as an authoritarian structure in *Das Grab des Lebendigen*.

Critical voices are also apparent in Austrian realist fiction. Ferdinand von Saar, for example, for too long regarded as a backward-looking nostalgic, frequently portrays family life as fraught with problems. In the novellas *Vae victis!* (1883) and *Der Brauer von Habrovan* (1901) Saar shows how adultery, both real and imagined, destroys families, driving husbands to kill themselves. The theme of adultery and its disastrous effects also occurs in *Geschichte eines Wiener Kindes* (1892), where a woman leaves her

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<sup>142</sup> The full title of this play is *Eine Wohnung ist zu vermieten in der Stadt. Eine wohnung ist zu verlassen in der Vorstadt. Eine Wohnung ist zu haben in Hietzing*. See Johann Nestroy, *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Jürgen Hein and Johann Hüttner (Vienna, Munich: Jugend und Volk, 1977-), XII: *Stücke 12*, ed. by W. E. Yates, pp. 5-82.

<sup>143</sup> These remarks on Viennese popular theatre are indebted to Ritchie Robertson, 'Häusliche Gewalt in der Wiener Moderne. Zu Veza Canettis Erzählung "Der Oger"', *Text + Kritik*, 156 (October 2002), 48-64 ( pp. 51-52). For a general account see Hugo Aust and others, *Volksstück: Vom Hanswurstspiel zum sozialen Drama der Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1989), pp. 114-149.

<sup>144</sup> On Anzengruber's *Das vierte Gebot* see esp. Rossbacher, *Literatur und Liberalismus*, pp. 295-302.

family and runs off with a young venture capitalist. Six months after her disappearance, her abandoned husband dies of a heart-attack and both her children perish after contracting diphtheria. In other texts, Saar shows how traditional family life is peculiarly exposed to the forces of modernity. In *Die Familie Worel* (1905), for example, he utilizes multiple narrative perspectives to provide a critical account of the disintegration of a Czech family, whose patriarch leaves a secure job as manager of a country estate to make a new life for himself in the city. While the rhetoric of the text is implicitly conservative, essentially showing the destructive consequences of embracing modern life, Saar reveals that social change is inevitable. Its impact can be avoided neither by the Worels nor by the aristocratic family whose service and protection they leave behind.

Dysfunctional family life, however, was a thematic preoccupation of Austrian fiction long before Saar. Indeed, if we look closely, it can even be detected in Franz Grillparzer's novella *Der arme Spielmann* (1848), a text once considered the forerunner of Biedermeier resignation and renunciation in Austrian realism.<sup>145</sup> While it is still true that Grillparzer encourages the reader to admire the quiet dignity and selflessness of the fiddler, Jakob, he also illuminates his troubled family life, showing how badly Jakob is treated by his powerful father, whom he disappoints. A slow learner at school, Jakob is forbidden to play the violin and subjected to threats by his father, worried that he will make nothing of himself. When his father rigs an oral exam, bribing a teacher so that his son will pass, Jakob still fails because he is unable to remember a key word during his Latin recitation. His father, who is also present at the exam, is so frustrated that he

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<sup>145</sup> See Magris, pp. 115-116.

prompts him loudly, shouting out the symbolic forgotten term: ‘Cachinum’, meaning loud laughter.<sup>146</sup> After this disaster, his father refuses to speak to him, sending him orders via other members of the household and, when his brothers leave home, disbands the kitchen, giving Jakob a food allowance (‘Kostgeld’), like a servant and forcing him to dine away from home. Despite all this Jakob never blames his father. Instead he feels eternally guilty for failing him. When his father dies unexpectedly, Jakob deeply regrets missing the opportunity to beg his forgiveness and thank him for his mercy. Unconditional love for one’s father, Grillparzer suggests, makes the web of patriarchal authority inextricable.

Among the most prominent admirers of *Der arme Spielmann* was Adalbert Stifter, who even modelled his story ‘Der arme Wohltäter’ (1847) on the text.<sup>147</sup> Strikingly, Stifter is also another example of an Austrian realist writer, whose fiction frequently features unhappy families, thereby contradicting the traditional notion that his work only portrayed wholesome images of harmonious domesticity.<sup>148</sup> Even the famous collection *Bunte Steine*, ostensibly intended for children, offers glimpses of awful family life. In the

<sup>146</sup> See Franz Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke, Ausgewählte Briefe, Gespräche, Berichte*, ed. by Peter Frank and Karl Pörnbacher, 4 vols (Munich: Hanser, 1960-1965), III, p. 160. Henceforth cited in text as GSW III with page numbers. This scene also resembles Hanno’s humiliation when attempting to recite a poem for his father in Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*. See MFA I.I, pp. 532-534.

<sup>147</sup> Although Stifter’s ‘Der arme Wohltäter’ was published in late 1847, before *Der arme Spielmann*, Stifter had already read Grillparzer’s novella in the summer of 1847, when it was sent to him as part of a draft version of the 1848 issue of the journal *Iris*, which also featured Stifter’s story ‘Prokopos’. See Adalbert Stifter, *Werke und Briefe: historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Alfred Doppler and Wolfgang Frühwald (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978-), II, 3: *Bunte Steine. Apparat, Kommentar, Teil I*, ed. by Walter Hettche, pp. 369-370. Subsequent references to this edition are henceforth cited in text as SHKG II, 2 and SHKG II, 3 with page numbers.

<sup>148</sup> For examples of the older sentimentalizing Stifter scholarship see Walther Rehm, *Nachsommer: Zur Deutung von Stifters Dichtung* (Bern: Francke, 1951) and Magris, pp. 135-152. The more recent scholarly trend towards uncovering the darker sides of Stifter’s work can, however, also be traced back as far as Erik Peter Lunding, *Adalbert Stifter: mit einem Anhang über Kierkegaard und die existentielle Literaturwissenschaft* (Copenhagen: Nyt nordisk forlag, 1946).

opening story ‘Granit’, for example, the innocent young protagonist receives a severe beating with a birch rod from his mother, after being tricked into smearing his feet in pitch by a mischievous local hawker, Andreas. In an earlier version of the story, ‘Die Pechbrenner’ (1848), Stifter describes how, during an outbreak of the plague, one of Andreas’ forefathers deserted his son on an exposed rock outcrop and left him to die as punishment for helping a family who have lost their way in the forest while attempting to escape the spread of the disease.<sup>149</sup> However, the darkest exploration of patriarchal authority gone awry in Stifter’s oeuvre comes in a text already mentioned, the third story in *Bunte Steine*: ‘Turmalin’. This enigmatic work requires special attention, since it anticipates many of the key motifs of Nabl’s treatment of the family in *Das Grab des Lebendigen*: obsession, patriarchal dominance, isolation and, eventually, imprisonment in the home.

### **Leichen im Keller: Obsession, Captivity and the Perils of Parental Neglect in Stifter’s ‘Turmalin’**

Like ‘Granit’, ‘Turmalin’ was revised specially for *Bunte Steine*. It began life as the novella ‘Der Pfortner im Herrenhaus’ (1851).<sup>150</sup> In contrast to ‘Granit’, though, Stifter

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<sup>149</sup> See also Ritchie Robertson, ‘Häusliche Gewalt in der Wiener Moderne’, p. 51. Robertson incorrectly states that the deserted boy’s father flees into the forest from the plague in ‘Die Pechbrenner’. This is only true of the revised version, ‘Granit’. In ‘Die Pechbrenner’, the man attempts to quarantine himself in the remote clearing in the woods where he already lives. Nevertheless, Robertson rightly stresses the key difference in the versions, the desertion of the boy as a punishment, which is removed from ‘Granit’.

<sup>150</sup> Probably written before the March revolutions of 1848, it was not published until 1851. See SHKG II/3, p. 411.

refrained from softening the content related to unhappy family life for inclusion in the children's collection. Instead, the 'Turmalin' version is even more mysterious and sinister. When the porter of a ramshackle Viennese mansion dies by falling off a ladder in his underground apartment, a young girl with a bulbous swollen head and a pet jackdaw is discovered by the neighbours. It transpires that she has been living in the cellar with her father, who used to lock her up when he was away earning a sparse living by playing his flute at country inns. It soon becomes clear that the porter was, in fact, the formerly wealthy Rentherr, who had suddenly vanished with his baby daughter at the outset of the text, shortly after the disappearance of his unfaithful wife. Through the charity of one of the neighbours and her supportive husband, the girl is gradually re-integrated into society, but what became of her mother and exactly how the eccentric Rentherr fell into such destitution and came to take out his grief on his daughter in such a catastrophic manner is never fully revealed.

In common with numerous later works by Saar, Stifter's text reveals the damaging impact adultery has on the family. Yet, the terrible events of 'Turmalin' are rooted, even more fundamentally, in the Rentherr's pathological obsession. This develops not as a direct result of his wife's affair, but is, instead, already a defining feature of their family life before she leaves him. Stifter establishes the precarious imbalance of the Rentherr's personality at the beginning of the text by describing, in great detail, a specially furnished room in his apartment adorned with countless portraits of famous men:

In dem Zimmer waren alle Wände ganz vollständig mit Blättern von Bildnissen berühmter Männer beklebt. Es war kein Stückchen auch nur handgroß, das von der ursprünglichen Wand zu sehen gewesen wäre. Damit er, oder gelegentlich auch ein Freund, wenn einer kam, diejenigen Männer, die ganz nahe oder hart am Fußboden sich befanden, betrachten konnte, hatte er ledergepolsterte Ruhebetten von verschiedener Höhe und mit Rollfüßen versehen machen lassen. Das niederste war eine Hand hoch. Man konnte sie zu was immer für Männer rollen, sich darauf niederlegen und die Männer betrachten. Für die hoch und höher hängenden hatte er doppelgestellige Rolleatern, deren Räder mit grünem Tuche überzogen waren, welche Leitern man in jede Gegend rollen und von deren Stufen aus man verschiedene Standpunkte gewinnen konnte. Überhaupt hatten alle Dinge in der Stube Rollen, daß man sie leicht von einer Stelle zu der andern bewegen konnte, um im Anschauen der Bildnisse nicht beirrt zu sein. In Hinsicht des Ruhmes der Männer war es dem Besitzer einerlei, welcher Lebensbeschäftigung sie angehört hatten und durch welche ihnen der Ruhm zuteil geworden war, er hatte sie womöglich alle.<sup>151</sup>

The obsessive attention to detail and cultivation of interior living quarters here is unusual even by Stifter's standards and in contrast to texts such as *Der Nachsommer* clearly intended to appear pathological. The central aspect is the discrepancy between the Rentherr's emphasis on allowing the observer to comfortably view any of the images conveyed by using the complicated array of mobile ladders and reclining chairs, and the essential meaninglessness of the images themselves. It is irrelevant who is portrayed, and why they are well-known, fame in itself is the only criterion that matters. The men pictured thus bear no obvious relationship to the life of the Rentherr, and represent nothing beyond this single abstract value. The pleasure derived from studying them is equally circular, it has no meaningful relation to anything outside of the room, the images do not inspire the Rentherr to do anything in particular except to immerse himself even more deeply in his unsocial reverence for these idols of fame. Moreover, the wheels

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<sup>151</sup> See SHKG II,2: *Bunte Steine. Buchfassungen*, ed. by Helmut Bergner, p. 136.

which allow his ladders and chairs to be shifted around the room varying the viewpoint of the observer also symbolize the lack of a secure grounded perspective characteristic of the Rentherr's later behaviour. Indeed, his fixation on his gallery of famous men is a clear example of what Stifter identifies in the foreword to *Bunte Steine* as a one-sided vanity indicative of periods of decline in human history:

Untergehenden Völkern verschwindet zuerst das Maß. Sie gehen nach Einzelnem aus, sie werfen sich mit kurzem Blick auf das Beschränkte und Unbedeutende, sie setzen das Bedingte über das Allgemeine; dann suchen sie den Genuß und das Sinnliche, sie suchen Befriedigung ihres Hasses und Neides gegen den Nachbar, in ihrer Kunst wird das Einseitige geschildert, das nur von einem Standpunkte Gültige, [...] der Unterschied zwischen Gut und Böse verliert sich, der einzelne verachtet das Ganze und geht seiner Lust und seinem Verderben nach. (SHKG II/2, 15-16)

It is this kind of obsessive monomania which later leads him to punish his daughter for her mother's transgressions, locking her up and thereby stunting her emotional and physical development. Rather than learning to accept first his wife's adultery and then her disappearance, let alone considering the possible reasons for these actions, the Rentherr blames others and becomes mentally unhinged, seeing the only solution in an even more radical retreat from life. While his wife's room could be accessed not only through her husband's room but also 'durch einen kleinen heimlichen Gang' (SHKG II/2, 137), his daughter later has no such opportunity to escape her father's care and control. Guarded from the perils of the outside world by her captivity, she develops no understanding of it. When she is forced by her father to meditate on her mother's predicament and guilt, or

the possibility of his death, she produces a body of writing which bemuses the second narrator when she reads it:

Was soll ich davon sagen? Ich würde sie Dichtungen nennen, wenn Gedanken in ihnen gewesen wären, oder wenn man Grund, Ursprung und Verlauf des Ausgesprochenen hätte enträthseln können. Von einem Verständnisse, was Tod, was Umirren in der Welt und sich aus Verzweiflung das Leben nehmen heiße, war keine Spur vorhanden, und doch war dieses alles der trübselige Inhalt der Ausarbeitungen. Der Ausdruck war klar und bündig, der Satzbau richtig und gut, und die Worte, obwohl sinnlos, waren erhaben. (SHKG II/2, 177)

Art without content is nothing but artifice, Stifter suggests. Yet content without form and control is equally unsatisfying. This is demonstrated earlier in the story by the porter's flute-playing, which is overheard by the charitable neighbour and second narrator prior to the discovery of his underground dwelling. While it is clear that his music is driven by intense sorrow, its strange form produces confusion and irritation for the listener:

Es war nicht ein ausgezeichnetes Spiel, es war nicht ganz stümperhaft, aber was die Aufmerksamkeit so erregte, war, daß es von allem abwich, was man gewöhnlich Musik nennt, und wie man sie lernt. Es hatte keine uns bekannte Weise zum Gegenstande, wahrscheinlich sprach der Spieler seine eigenen Gedanken aus [...]. Was am meisten reizte, war, daß, wenn er einen Gang angenommen und das Ohr verleitet hatte, mitzugehen, immer etwas anderes kam, als was man erwartete, und das Recht hatte, zu erwarten, so daß man stets von vorne anfangen und mitgehen mußte, und endlich in eine Verwirrung gerieth, die man beinahe irrsinnig hätte nennen können. (SHKG II/2, 152-153)

It is this descent into lunacy which prevents the mysterious music from truly reaching the listener. One is almost moved but not quite: 'Man war beinahe gerührt' (SHKG II/2, 153). The same can be said of the Rentherr's death which ends his miserable life but

invites only the partial sympathies of the reader because of the negative impact his unfettered sadness has had on his innocent daughter. To a great extent, Stifter implies that the porter's demise is his own fault, stemming from the tragic imbalance in his personality. This is certainly suggested by the manner of his death, falling from a ladder whilst, one assumes, peering out across the street. The ladder, of course, reminds us of the mobile contraptions used to view his gallery of idols earlier in the text. The limited view afforded from the cellar window symbolically underlines the loss of acuity which derives from the bewildering sensory overload of his study, with every inch covered by images lacking any proper relationship to the Rentherr's life. It is thus both a source and symbol of confusion.<sup>152</sup>

Stifter seeks, however, to counteract this moral and psychological confusion in the second part of the text. For this reason, he dwells less on the potentially titillating details of the Rentherr's death and intentionally withholds the kind of explanatory conclusion the reader expects and desires. What initially appears to the throng outside the Rentherr's house as suicide is established as accidental death, and the fate of the Rentherr's adulterous wife is never uncovered. Instead the narrative focuses on the re-socialization of the Rentherr's traumatized daughter through the charity of the second narrator and her sympathetic husband. Stifter shows us with great sensitivity the girl's strong attachment to her underground dwelling and the gradual process by which she is

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<sup>152</sup> On this point cf. Uwe Werlein, 'Dilettanten im Bildraum – Lost in Hyperspace. Bilder berühmter Männer in Adalbert Stifters *Turmalin*' in *Der Bildhunger der Literatur. Festschrift für Gunter E. Grimm*, ed. by Dieter Heimböckel and Uwe Werlein (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), pp. 157-168 (esp. pp. 163-164). Werlein applies modern 'Hypertexttheorie' to Stifter's text, arguing that the gallery is a kind of multimedial environment with the inherent potential to produce a loss of orientation and cognitive overload in the dilettantish user.

re-educated to come to terms with life in the outside world. Her swollen head is demystified with a medical explanation and partly cured by visits to iodine baths. Through the influence of basic reading and loving human contact the negative consequences of her previous upbringing are gradually rectified:

Wir suchten ihm Geschmack an Verfertigung von allerlei weiblichen Handarbeiten beizubringen, und endlich durch Gespräche und durch Lesen einfacher Bücher, hauptsächlich aber durch Umgang jene wilde und zerrissene, ja fast unheimliche Unterweisung in einfache, überstimmende und verstandene Gedanken umzuwandeln und ein Verstehen der Dinge der Welt anzubahnen. (SHKG II/2, 178-179)

All this exemplifies the workings of the underlying force for good in the world, the so-called ‘sanftes Gesetz’ outlined in the collection’s famous foreword. While modern society is on the verge of losing sight of this, as the domestic crisis at the heart of ‘Turmalin’ illustrates, Stifter’s art attempts to bring it back into focus. The bi-partite narrative structure of the text which sets the pathological Rentherr against the redeeming influence of the second narrator provides a means of achieving this aim. The Rentherr embodies the transitory fancies of his generation, whereas the narrator and the second half of the narrative uncover a deep-seated, but permanent pattern of quiet humility and moderation which runs through all of human history. Harmonious family life, the end of the text implies, both expresses and reinforces this ‘sanftes Gesetz’, and must be protected at all costs.

**‘In ein Grab hatte man ihn gestoßen...’: The Pathology of Family Life in Nabl’s *Das Grab des Lebendigen***

While 'Turmalin' gives readers a mysterious glimpse of pathological domestic life, Stifter still ultimately upholds the sanctity of Biedermeier family values by emphasizing the restorative effects the second narrator's family have on the Rentherr's daughter. Written over half a century later, in a decade where the family had been subjected to savage attacks by prominent critics, such as Otto Gross, and identified as a major source of neurotic illness by Freud, Nabl's *Das Grab des Lebendigen* offers no such counter-balance. Instead, Nabl draws on motifs and literary practices recognizable in Stifter's text, but also present in other Austrian explorations of domestic unrest, to provide a meticulous critique of the stifling power structures and emotional dependencies underlying and sustaining bourgeois family life. His novel, more in line with the critical realism of Anzengruber, sensitively exposes the destructive potential hidden beneath the Biedermeier idealization of the family.

Tightly knit, self-sufficient, yet already emotionally distant, the Ortliebs are thrown into disarray by the premature death of father Anton early in the novel. The void left by the loss of the family's figurehead and breadwinner destroys the sense of security which has characterized their domestic life thus far, and calls into question the obsessive devotion shown by Anton's wife and her two daughters, Anna and Josefine, to their household chores. The family responds to this existential crisis by fighting to preserve their chosen way of life, even in the absence of Anton. Gradually the eldest daughter Josefine takes control of the family, rather than her physically handicapped brother Walter, assuming the authority previously held by her dead father in a surprising reversal

of traditional gender expectations. In an increasingly desperate attempt to maintain the integrity of their family unit, sealing it off hermetically from the outside world, Josefine manipulates both her siblings and their ailing mother. She begins by using emotional blackmail to dissuade her sister Anna from marrying a gentle and good-natured suitor, Herr Nikolai. Motivated implicitly by a possessive, incestuous attachment to her brother, she then thwarts his successive attempts to escape the narrow confines of their family life. Firstly, she intervenes via her mother, to stop Walter's visits to Olga Clermont, the socially superior daughter of the aristocrats on whose estate his grandparents work and with whom Walter has fallen secretly in love. She then embarrasses him by a public outburst of hysterics, when he secretly joins a bohemian gathering hosted by their neighbour, the trainee actress Fräulein Kranzler. Last of all, after a move to the outskirts of a small provincial town intended to reduce their contact with the outside world to a bare minimum, Josefine discovers that her brother has been walking to work with a female colleague. This is enough to convince her that Walter cannot be trusted out of the house. She therefore lures him into the two-room cellar complex, which she, with the help of her by now entirely subordinate sister Anna, has covertly furnished with a bed and a table and even equipped with Walter's lute, and locks him in. Soon, however, the gossiping neighbours begin to suspect something untoward and the police are called to the house. When they arrive, Anna frees Walter from his underground prison, but Josefine intervenes and attempts to shoot him. Anna manages to disarm her but Josefine avoids arrest by hanging herself.

Since Anton Ortlieb dies almost at the outset of the text, stripping the family unexpectedly of its patriarch, it might seem that Nabl departs from the tradition of Austrian writing outlined above which repeatedly connects unhappy family life to the adverse effects of patriarchal authority. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Anton's subordination of his wife, and the effect this has on his children during their formative years, creates behavioural patterns so strong that they cannot be broken, even by his death. Anton's total dominance of the family derives from his unshakeable self-belief, which is established in the opening line of the text: 'Der Inspektor Anton Ortlieb war ein Mann, den das Gefühl einer vollkommenen Lebensberechtigung bis in die letzte, geheimste Tiefe seines Inneren erfüllte; es verlieh ihm ein außerordentlich starkes, durchaus nicht in lächerlicher Weise zur Schau getragenes Selbstbewußtsein.'<sup>153</sup> Anton is thus, as the use of the term 'Lebensberechtigung' immediately suggests, a small-scale petit-bourgeois version of Johannes Arlet, the patriarchal tyrant in *Ödhof*, who destroys his family and then himself.<sup>154</sup> Having proudly worked his way up from humble roots to a secure bureaucratic position in the administration of the Imperial postal service, Anton cemented his newfound social status by marrying the plain daughter of a high-up official, rather than taking a wife from a similar background to his own. Although his wife initially saw herself as his social superior, her early attempts to gain the upper hand in their marriage are preemptively crushed by her husband's overwhelming sense of entitlement:

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<sup>153</sup> Nabl, AW IV: *Die Ortliebschen Frauen*, p. 5.

<sup>154</sup> On the notion of 'Lebensberechtigung' in Nabl's life and work see also Ingrid Cella, 'Nachwort' in Franz Nabl, *Die Ortliebschen Frauen. Studie aus dem kleinbürgerlichen Leben* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna: Ullstein, 1981), pp. 452-464 (pp. 457-458).

Das Bewußtsein, durch eigene Kraft das erworben zu haben, was ihr schon durch Geburt zugefallen war, gab ihm ein so starkes Ebenbürtigkeitsgefühl, daß er alle ihre Versuche, sich über ihm zu stellen, im Keim mit starken, beinahe rücksichtslosen Griffen erstickte. (AW IV, 7)

As a result of this defeat, Frau Ortlieb takes solace in her control of the household, devoting herself utterly to a monotonous daily routine of cleaning, cooking and sewing:

Durch die späte Heirat war ihr ein kaum mehr erwartetes Lebensziel geboten worden, und nachdem sie es einmal erkannt und sich, nach den vorübergehenden vergeblichen Versuchen, eine gewisse Überlegenheit über ihren Mann geltend zu machen, damit zufriedengegeben hatte, bildete sich in ihr halb unbewußt und durch das Wesen Ortliebs beeinflußt das Verlangen aus, ihre Stellung im Leben, über die sie nun nicht mehr hinauswachsen konnte, in jeder Weise und bis in die kleinste Einzelheit so vollkommen wie möglich auszufüllen. Ihre Familie und der Haushalt, den sie für diese zu führen hatte, waren das Gebiet, in dem sie ihr Leben bewähren mußte, und sie begann damit, daß sie es gleich einem Besitz an Grund und Boden, den kein fremder Fuß betreten durfte, gegen die Außenwelt scharf und unnachsichtig abgrenzte, ohne dabei das Gefühl eines Opfers oder Verzichtes auf irgend etwas anderes Gutes und Schönes zu empfinden. Diese Abgrenzung ging tatsächlich so weit, daß sie keinen anderen Menschen in ihr Hauswesen eingreifen ließ. (AW IV, 8)

As this quotation reveals, Frau Ortlieb conforms wholeheartedly to Biedermeier ideals of humility, modesty and the proud cultivation of the domestic sphere. She accepts the narrow boundaries imposed on her life as a source of happiness, and is unaware that she is actually giving anything up. However, in contrast to the acts of renunciation performed by the priest in Stifter's *Der arme Wohltäter* (1847) or the musician in Grillparzer's *Der arme Spielmann*, the reader is scarcely expected to admire her self-sacrifice. Instead, as Nabl's narrator carefully shows us, she only becomes fixated on her household as a result of her own submissiveness, and her husband's assertiveness. She idealizes domesticity

because to do otherwise would expose her to the meaninglessness of her existence, and what appears to her, at least half-consciously, as a choice is actually forced upon her by patriarchal authority. Frau Ortlieb's devotion to housework is merely a domestic version of her husband's preoccupation with achieving the utmost within the confined limits life has set for him and, as Nabl's narrator explicitly tells the reader, both of these traits are basically pathological (AW IV, 8).<sup>155</sup>

Just as in 'Turmalin', *Das Grab des Lebendigen* gradually demonstrates how the actions of misguided and obsessive parents ultimately seal the unfortunate fates of their children.<sup>156</sup> Initially, though, the Ortlieb children are unaware that anything is amiss. They regard the restrictive isolation of the family unit as both positive and natural, viewing it as a metaphorical rampart providing protection, rather than an impenetrable wall hemming them in:

Es schien, als sei rings um sie ein hoher, undurchdringlicher Wall aufgerichtet, durch den keine Pforte ins Freie führte und über den sie nicht hinwegblicken konnten, aber sie hatten dabei nicht das Gefühl einer Einengung oder eines schmerzlichen Verlustes, sondern nur die Empfindung, daß das, was sie umschloß und was sich ihrer ersten Worte und Gedanken bemächtigte, eben alles sei, was es für sie gab. (AW IV, 9)<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Freud interestingly identifies similar behaviour in Dora's mother in his famous treatise 'Bruchstück einer Hysterieanalyse' (1905), which he refers to as a typical case of 'Hausfrauenpsychose'. See FSA, VI: *Hysterie und Angst*, pp. 98-99. A further fictional example is Karl's long-suffering mother in Franz Werfel's *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig* (1920), who also develops an obsession with hygiene as a substitute for her emotionally barren and oppressed family life. See Werfel, *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig*, p. 58.

<sup>156</sup> The negative impact parents have on their children is a common element in other Austrian works, such as Anzengruber's *Das vierte Gebot* and can also be detected in Nabl's own earlier writing. For more detail, see my discussions of 'Der Schwur des Martin Krist' in Chapter 1 and *Ödhof* in Chapter 2 above. The theme is also common in Naturalist drama where it is frequently linked with discourses of heredity and degeneration. See Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts* (1881) and Gerhart Hauptmann, *Vor Sonnenaufgang* (1889).

<sup>157</sup> See also AW IV, p. 16: 'Sie standen auf dem Stückchen Grund und Boden, das schon die Mutter für sich und für ihr Werk abgegrenzt hatte, und der Wunsch, die unsichtbare Mauer, die rings um sie aufgewachsen war, zu überblicken oder eine Tür ins Freie zu finden, blieb ihnen fremd.'

Like the Rentherr's daughter locked up in the cellar, they have never experienced anything else and thus have no point of comparison. Although they are not, at least at this point, physically trapped, and do not suffer emotionally, as yet, from their hermetic unchanging domestic life, they grow up thoroughly alienated from the outside world. Their consciousness is dominated so absolutely by their nuclear family that they can scarcely believe that their schoolmates also have families or homes of their own:

Sie wußten wohl, daß es außer dem Vater und der Mutter noch andere Menschen auf der Welt gab, so gut wie andere Häuser mit anderen Wohnungen, aber sie konnten nicht recht glauben, daß diese vielen kleinen Geschöpfe, die mit ihnen in der Schulstube beisammensaßen, in einer gleichen oder auch nur ähnlichen Weise Kinder waren wie sie selbst, daß sie Väter und Mütter hatten und ein Heim, darin sie spielten, aßen und schliefen. Sie sahen in ihnen etwas ganz anders Geartetes, ja förmlich etwas, wovor sie Furcht und Mißtrauen empfinden mußten. (AW IV, 9)

The inherent feelings of alienation revealed in this quotation are further reinforced by the actions of Frau Ortlieb, who forestalls any attempt by her children to make friendships outside of the family by stigmatizing other people as carriers of disease (AW IV, 10). Pursuing a similar pedagogical policy, she transfers her own ritualistic obsession with housework to her daughters, instilling in them the belief that these tasks are necessary with stories about the dangerous illnesses the girls may contract, if their chores are not carried out. They, therefore, grow up with an intense fear of contact with anybody and anything from outside their family circle, stunting their emotional development and leaving them entirely dependent on each other. Even visits to their own grandparents

become a torture, lessened only by the similarity of their armchairs to the Ortliebs' own furniture:

Das einzige, was ihnen den Aufenthalt in der Stube der Großeltern erträglicher machte, waren die Sessel, auf denen man saß und die die gleiche Form und die gleichen Überzüge zeigten, wie das Kanapee und die Stühle daheim in der eigenen Wohnstube; denn die Gärtnersleute hatten ihrem Sohne bei seiner Verheiratung einige ihrer Möbel, deren sie nicht bedurften, zur Aussteuer mitgegeben. Auf diesen wohlbekannten Stühlen saßen sie nun wie auf Rettungsinseln inmitten eines dunklen, drohenden Gewässers und tranken den Kaffee und aßen die Mehlspeisen, die nicht von der Hand ihrer Mutter zubereitet waren. Jeder Schluck, jeder Bissen wurde in ihrem Mund zu einer zähen Masse, deren Geschmack sie angstvoll und mißtrauisch prüften, an der sie lange Zeit kauen und würgen mußten, bevor sie imstande waren, sie zu schlucken. Und wenn sie in ihrer namenlosen Ängstlichkeit irgend etwas Widerwärtiges oder auch nur Ungewohntes darin entdeckt zu haben glaubten und keine Möglichkeit fanden, den Bissen während eines scheinbaren Schnuzens ins Sacktuch zu spucken, dann konnte es oft genug geschehen, daß eines oder das andere von ihnen plötzlich bis an die Stirn erbleichte, unter undeutlichem Gestammel hinauseilte und sich erbrach. (AW IV, 11)

While their fear gradually fades as they grow older, the children are still left with a general sense of unease whenever they are outside of their own four walls, and none of them ever truly manages to escape the internalized idea that only contact with family members is legitimate.<sup>158</sup>

Problematically, though, when viewed from the distanced analytical perspective provided by Nabl's narrator in the first section of the novel, the Ortliebs' rigidly self-contained family life is hardly capable of fulfilling the emotional needs of its individual members. The children grow up without ever experiencing affection from or between

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<sup>158</sup> See AW IV, p. 13: 'Später, als sie erwachsener waren [...], verlor sich zwar ihre kindisch-sinnlose Furcht, aber eine gewisse dumpfe Beklemmung, die sie beim Betreten aller anderen Räume als ihrer elterlichen Wohnung empfanden, blieb bei den Besuchen im Gärtnerhause doch immer in ihnen zurück.'

their parents; even when they were very young their parents never kissed, caressed nor praised them, and their later childhood games are subconsciously chosen to avoid physical contact. Thus, the narrator concludes:

Ein Fremder, der die Verhältnisse nicht näher kannte, hätte leicht glauben können, hier seien Menschen durch einen bösen äußeren Zwang zusammengekettet und müßten nun gleichgültig oder wohl gar in stummer Feindseligkeit nebeneinander herleben. Und doch war es vielleicht gerade diese Zurückhaltung, dieses Fehlen sichtbarer und befreiender Zeichen ihrer Gefühle, das sie dahin brachte, sich immer dichter und ängstlicher von allem abzuschließen, was nicht mit ihnen und ihrer nächsten Umgebung in Zusammenhang stand, und bloß in den Alltagsbeziehungen zueinander die Erfüllung ihres Lebens zu sehen. (AW IV, 18)

The cohesion of the Ortlieb family unit is provided not by internal bonds of harmony and love but by its authoritarian structure, centred entirely on fulfilling the daily needs of the patriarchal figurehead, Anton. This is reinforced by a strict process of othering, whereby the actions of the neighbours are repeatedly criticized and disparaged, in order to sustain the idea that their own way of life is superior. However, as the events of the text reveal this alone is not sufficient to withstand the upheaval precipitated by Anton's death.

Without Anton, the metaphorical rampart protecting them from the outside world comes crashing down, exposing them to the frightening prospect of change without the help of his guiding hand:

Aber das Bewußtsein, daß der Mensch, um den sich ihr Dasein bisher aufgebaut hatte und von dem ihr ganzes Zusammenleben ausgegangen war, von nun an nie wieder in ihre Mitte treten sollte, vermochte keinen Schmerz, keine Trauer in ihnen auszulösen, sondern nur hilfloses, stummes Entsetzen vor etwas Fremdem, Neuem, dem sie sich nicht entziehen konnten und mit dem sie sich in irgendeiner Weise abfinden mußten. Nicht der

Tod und das Hinscheiden des Vaters selbst erfüllten sie mit Verzweiflung und Jammer, sonder eine Reihe unvermeidlicher Veränderungen, die damit verbunden waren und die ihnen wie ein roher, widerechtlicher Eingriff in ihren einzigen, ängstlich gehüteten Besitz erschienen. Sie konnten es nicht begreifen, daß sie von jetzt an bei der Erledigung ihrer vormittägigen Einkäufe und bei der Zubereitung der Mahlzeiten nur von ihren eigenen Erwägungen geleitet und nicht mehr jener letzten, bestimmenden Rücksicht unterworfen sein sollten, die sie bisher zu der vollen Entfaltung ihrer bescheidenen weiblichen Fähigkeit angetrieben und den eigentlichen Reiz ihrer Arbeit ausgemacht hatte. Ihre eigene Anspruchslosigkeit war ja in früheren Zeiten gewiß keine geringere gewesen als jetzt, aber in der Erinnerung wuchs die nur selten und in wenigen Worten geäußerte Anerkennung des Vaters für ihre Kochkunst und Häuslichkeit ins Ungeheuerliche und rief in ihnen die Empfindung wach, als hätten sie damals alles tatsächlich nur seinetwegen geleistet und als sei jetzt, da er nicht mehr mit ihnen lebte, alle Mühe und Arbeit sinnlos und überflüssig. (AW IV, 23)

The structure and meaning of bourgeois family life, this quotation suggests, are thoroughly dependent on patriarchal authority. The void left by its removal results in a practical rather than emotional crisis for the remaining family members.

Conventionally, of course, one might expect Anton's son, Walter, to fill his father's shoes and take control of the family's affairs. Unfortunately for the Ortliebs, however, Walter, like Hanno Buddenbrook and Heinz Arlet before him, is weak, effeminate and ultimately incapable of ever replacing his authoritarian father. Born with a club foot, Walter chooses the company of his mother and sisters over that of other boys, and prefers to play with his sister's dolls rather than with masculine toys such as tin soldiers or wooden building blocks (AW IV, 16). Although he is subconsciously elevated to the status of his father on entering puberty, symbolically underlined when he is given the late Anton's bedroom at the start of his secondary school career, Walter is never able to emancipate himself from the subordinate position his handicap imposes on him.

Instead the real heir to Anton Ortlieb's authority is Walter's elder sister, Josefine, who exploits the family's fear of change and their inherent desire to be controlled, in order to seize power in the direct aftermath of her father's death. Only a week after Anton's funeral, when his parents point out that the family will probably be forced to leave their beloved home now their son can no longer provide for them, Josefine breaks the ensuing silence, with a visceral rallying cry:

Aber plötzlich gellte mitten in das qualvolle, bange Schweigen ein schriller, abwehrender Angstschrei hinein. "Nein! ..." Im Anfang wußte niemand, wer ihn ausgestoßen hatte. Dann sahen sie, daß Josefine, die ältere, neunzehnjährige Tochter, mit weitaufgerissenen Augen und zuckenden Lippen dasaß, als ob sie im nächsten Augenblick aufspringen wollte wie ein gereiztes Tier. Ihr mageres, kleines Gesicht war noch bleicher als sonst, und ihre schmale, eingesunkene Brust wurde von hastigen, beinahe keuchenden Atemzügen ruckweise gehoben. (AW IV, 26-27)

Although she has her mother's physical frailty, she is endowed with Anton's mental vitality and confidence. This innate trait, as the Darwinist overtones of the simile 'wie ein gereiztes Tier' implies, makes her ascendancy possible. She asserts herself, ordering their finances, and soon, despite her weak constitution, appears as the family's saviour:

Nun sahen die anderen in ihr die Retterin, und weil sie es ihr allein zu danken glaubten, wenn sie in den geliebten Räumen bleiben durften, entwickelte sich in ihnen allmählich und unbemerkt ein Gefühl des Verpflichtetseins und der Abhängigkeit, und zuletzt geschah in allen Fällen immer nur das, was dieses schwächliche Geschöpf mit dem unentwickelten, beinahe zurückgebliebenen Kinderkörper und den großen, feindselig-klugen Augen im alten Gesichtlein wollte, meist noch bevor es seinen Wunsch mit Worten geäußert hatte. (AW IV, 30-31)

This emphasis on her frail, underdeveloped appearance, which stands in clear contrast to her position of authority in the family, is part of a narrative technique which distances the reader from Josefine, making her tyranny appear grotesque and all the more pathological. If readers, and even the other characters, could sometimes admire the strength and apparently fearless individualism of Arlet in *Ödhof*, Josefine is portrayed as a tyrant with few positive qualities.<sup>159</sup> Haggard and unattractive at the outset, her ugly exterior acts as a measure of her increasing insanity in the course of the novel, reaching an extreme shortly before she locks up Walter in the cellar:

Unter den tief eingesunkenen Augen lagen bläuliche Schatten, die, besonders wenn sich die ebenfalls bläulichen Lider schlossen, den Eindruck leerer Höhlen hervorriefen; trocken und bleifarben preßten sich unter der spitz vorspringenden Nase die Lippen übereinander [...]. Das Gräßlichste aber waren die beiden tiefen Schatten an den eingefallenen Schläfen, die wie zwei Gruben aussahen und die Vorstellung erweckten, der Kopf des Mädchens könne im nächsten Augenblick zu einem Totenschädel werden. (AW IV, 392)

But it is not only her lack of aesthetic charm which alienates the reader from Josefine. Nabl combines the frequent use of dialogue with narratorial commentary to reveal how she uses rhetorical tactics to cruelly manipulate her siblings and mother. For example, early in the novel she laughs wickedly at Anna poking fun at her suitor Herr Nikolai, so as to discourage her from accepting his offer of marriage. Later on, as the narrator explicitly tells us, she employs the very same method of vindictive ridicule when talking

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<sup>159</sup> In *Ödhof*, for example, the villager Kroschek thinks to himself on seeing Arlet for the first time: “So muß der liebe Gott ausgesehen haben, wie er noch jung war.” See AW III, p. 117.

to Walter about his visit to Fräulein Kranzler.<sup>160</sup> Her calculating approach is further underlined by the omniscient narrative report of Josefine's thoughts prior to this conversation with Walter, which clearly illustrates her cool, strategic exploitation of her brother's guilt:

Heute konnte sie ihm verzeihen und ihm mit ihrer Vergebung zugleich eine neue, stärkere Fessel auferlegen, die er in der Erinnerung an sein Vergehen nicht so leicht wieder abstreifen durfte. [...] Wenn sie ihm jetzt, solange er von der Reue über sein Vorgehen und dem Gefühl seiner Schuld vollständig beherrscht war, entgegenkam, dann würde er sich ihr vollständig unterwerfen und ihre Güte wie ein unverdientes Geschenk empfangen. (AW IV, 266-267)

A further aspect of her scheming rhetoric is the repeated insistence that she is a victim who sacrifices everything for the family, when she is in fact always in control, cunningly exploiting her siblings for her own ends.<sup>161</sup> Indeed, in the course of the text her self-pitying belief that she carries the burdens of the family on her shoulders escalates into an obsessive paranoia, forcing her to seek ever increased isolation for her family, and above all, for her brother Walter to whom she has an all-consuming possessive-incestuous attachment. Her obsessive egotism and distrust of others, of course, strongly recalls the insane Rentherr in 'Turmalin', who also attempts to shield a beloved family member from the outside world by taking a subterranean apartment with barred windows in decrepit suburban mansion, where he locks up his daughter. Both characters place their own wishes and desires before their next-of-kin, revealing how familial love can become an emotional, and alarmingly even physical, prison for the object of their affections.

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<sup>160</sup> Compare AW IV, p. 72 with AW IV, p. 270.

<sup>161</sup> See AW IV, p. 76, 320, 323, 355, 356 and 379.

However, Stifter's Rentherr is not the only prominent character in Austrian fiction with whom Josefine bears comparison. A series of unexpected parallels can also be detected between Josefine and Grete, Gregor's sister, in *Die Verwandlung*, which transcend obvious stylistic differences between Nabl and Kafka's texts. For example, both Josefine and Grete assume control of their families in the absence of a dominant father-figure, in the former case after Anton Ortlieb's death, in the latter case in place of Gregor, whose transformation prevents him from continuing to assume the responsibilities previously vacated by their elderly father. Additionally, Josefine's animalistic outburst with which she signals her resistance to the disintegration of the family unit is strangely reminiscent of the scene in *Die Verwandlung*, where Grete calls for Gregor's removal, banging the table with her hand to establish her authority on the matter: "Liebe Eltern", sagte die Schwester und schlug zur Einleitung mit der Hand auf den Tisch, "so geht es nicht weiter. Wenn ihr das nicht einsehet, ich sehe es ein. Ich will vor diesem Untier nicht den Namen meines Bruders aussprechen."<sup>162</sup> Both Kafka and Nabl subtly indicate the growing position of authority assumed by Grete and Josefine by reference to symbolic gesturing with their hands and especially their fists.<sup>163</sup> The most striking instance, among many, in Nabl's novel is the scene where Josefine screws up the

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<sup>162</sup> Franz Kafka, *Drucke zu Lebzeiten*, ed. by Hans-Gerd Koch and others (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), p. 189. Henceforth cited in text as KDZL with page numbers.

<sup>163</sup> Ritchie Robertson demonstrates how Kafka signals Grete's gradually increasing power and vitality through her use of her hands and fists on a number of occasions in the text. See Robertson, *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 84 and KDZL, p. 166 and 178. For similarly aggressive use of hands and fists by Josefine see AW IV, p. 249, 276, 307, 399, 401. Shortly before Walter's release the imminent end of Josefine's reign of terror is also indicated through the symbol of the clenched fist seen by Anna in the crowd of neighbours gathered outside their house: "Alle schaun sie her ... und einer droht sogar mit der Faust!", AW IV, p. 441.

embroidered lute-strap which her brother was given by her rival for his affections, Olga Clermont, crushing it until it disappears in her clenched fist: ‘Er hatte den Kopf tief auf die Brust senken lassen, ohne zu bemerken, wie sie das Band immer mehr und mehr zerknüllte, bis es vollständig in ihrer geschlossenen Faust verschwand’ (AW IV, 276).<sup>164</sup>

Even more prominent, however, is the parallel role played by latent incestuous desire in the brother-sister relationships in both texts. This is especially evident from the content of Gregor’s fantasies while Grete plays her violin for the family’s new tenants:

Er war entschlossen, bis zur Schwester vorzudringen, sie am Rock zu zupfen und ihr dadurch anzudeuten, sie möge doch mit ihrer Violine in sein Zimmer kommen, denn niemand lohnte hier das Spiel so, wie er es lohnen wollte. Er wollte sie nicht mehr aus seinem Zimmer lassen, wenigstens nicht, solange er lebte; seine Schreckgestalt sollte ihm zum erstenmal nützlich werden; an allen Türen seines Zimmers wollte er gleichzeitig sein und den Angreifern entgegenfauchen; die Schwester aber sollte nicht gezwungen, sondern freiwillig bei ihm bleiben; sie sollte neben ihm auf dem Kanapee sitzen, das Ohr zu ihm herunterneigen, und er wollte ihr dann anvertrauen, daß er die feste Absicht gehabt habe, sie auf das Konservatorium zu schicken [...]. Nach dieser Erklärung würde die Schwester in Tränen der Rührung ausbrechen, und Gregor würde sich bis zu ihrer Achsel erheben und ihren Hals küssen. (KDZL, 185-186)

Gregor’s sentiments, especially the idea that only he can truly appreciate his sibling, are echoed by Josefine during her emotional collapse moments before Walter’s escape from captivity:

“Jetzt bist du frei ... und jetzt kannst du dir dein Bürofräulein nehmen ... oder die andere, die mit dem ledigen Kind ... oder meinetwegen auch das Fräulein Kranzler! Oder die Clermont! ... Du hast ja Auswahl genug! Nur zu! Nur zu! Meinen Segen hast du! Und meinen Glückwunsch dazu ...!” – Ihr Lachen ging allmählich in wimmerndes Weinen über. – “Aber ... hörst du, Walter ... so ... so lieb, wie ich dich gehabt hab ... so lieb wird dich keine von ihnen haben ... keine!” (AW IV, 446)

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<sup>164</sup> On this image see also Herzmann, p. 97.

Moreover, a closer examination of the texts reveals that these incestuous feelings stem from similarities in the structure of both characters' family life. For example, we know from the beginning of the text that Gregor, like Nabl's Josefine, devotes himself utterly to the well-being of his family, suppressing his emotional and sexual development for the common good, and experiencing minimal social contact with people outside of the family circle. Both characters thus develop close attachments only to their immediate relations, who naturally also function as the prime targets for their libidinal energies. There are, of course, subtle differences in emphasis between Gregor and Grete's relationship, and Josefine and Walter's. Yet these are resolvable by reference to the opposite gender roles involved. Gregor's attachment to Grete is clearly informed by his role, prior to his transformation, as a surrogate father-figure. This is why his sexual fantasy of kissing her neck follows on from a reward scenario, where he as breadwinner provides for her musical education. Josefine sees herself more in the role of Walter's mother, who has to protect him from the inevitable disappointments she tells herself he will suffer in relationships with other women as a result of his club foot, and who alone can offer him the devotion he deserves.<sup>165</sup>

There is one more important connection between *Das Grab der Lebendigen* and *Die Verwandlung*, namely the role played by music as a vehicle for revealing these hidden desires. Gregor's fantasy comes in direct response to his sister's violin-playing, which speaks to his primitive urges in a way which language cannot and seems to

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<sup>165</sup> See AW IV, p. 388.

promise a way out of his isolation: ‘War er ein Tier, da ihn Musik so ergriff? Ihm war, als zeige sich ihm der Weg zu der ersehnten unbekanntem Nahrung’ (KDZL, 185). Walter’s music, especially his lute-playing, is a leitmotif which runs through Nabl’s novel. It serves not only as entertainment for his family, but also forms a major point of conflict with them, since it is the means by which he escapes the confines of the home, and comes into contact with other women. In this latter sense, it is fundamentally connected with erotic desire.<sup>166</sup> Through his music Walter meets and falls in love with Olga Clermont, and by playing his lute for Fräulein Kranzler and her bohemian friends, he experiences his first kiss. Since feelings of shame and guilt deriving from his physical handicap and restrictive family life stifle the development of Walter’s sexuality, music acts as the only acceptable outlet for his libido. This is clearly indicated not only by his choice of instrument, but also by the symbolic implications of the songs he sings, which are drawn either from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806), or the medieval love lyric of Walter von der Vogelweide.<sup>167</sup> As a cripple, Walter cannot hope to seriously woo the attractive Olga Clermont, but by performing a version of ‘Got gebe ir iemer guoten tac’ for her, his unrequited longings are allowed to surface.

Yet music in Nabl’s text is not just a medium for sublimating the musician’s repressed sexual desire. It is equally capable of entertaining and even unleashing the

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<sup>166</sup> This is no coincidence, since the lute has traditionally been associated with romance and sexuality in Western literature. For example, see the opening scene of Shakespeare’s *King Richard III*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. by Janis Lull (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 61-62: ‘Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front/And now, instead of mourning barbed steeds/To fright the souls of fearful adversaries/He capers nimbly in a lady’s chamber/To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.’

<sup>167</sup> The songs explicitly inserted into the text are ‘Der Bettelvogt’ and ‘Müllers Abschied’ from Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and Walter von der Vogelweide’s ‘Got gebe ir iemr guoten tac’. See AW IV, p. 100, 162, pp. 170-171, p. 197, 228 and 229.

listener's forbidden libidinal urges. For this reason, Josefine asks Walter to leave his door open when practising the ballads he intends to sing for Olga, and later breaks down in tears of joy when he takes up his lute for the first time in their new provincial home. She, like Gregor Samsa, wants her sibling to play only for her, believing that only she can truly appreciate him and his song.<sup>168</sup> Subconsciously aware of the underlying eroticism of musical performance, Josefine feels like a deceived lover when Walter plays for other women. It is, therefore, unsurprising when she shatters her brother's lute after discovering him playing at Fräulein Kranzler's party (AW IV, 255). By cruelly punishing him in this way and, ultimately, by imprisoning him, Josefine's aggressive sexual jealousy echoes the malevolence of the 'Bettelvogt' in the Ortlieb family's favourite ballad, who chastises his beautiful wife and locks up his rival in a tower.<sup>169</sup>

This motif of captivity, of course, also recalls the Rentherr's attempt to guard and isolate his daughter from the outside world in 'Turmalin'. While both Stifter and Nabl use the symbolic dimensions of literary space to bring out the emotional and social isolation of their characters, music, as the most intangible and elusive of art-forms, often finds a way of transcending the spatial restrictions imposed on them. Even though the Rentherr purposefully exchanges his city apartment for the seclusion of a dark basement dwelling in the suburbs, his strange nocturnal flute playing is overheard by the second narrator and her husband, who later help to liberate and re-socialize the Rentherr's

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<sup>168</sup> See AW IV, p. 154.

<sup>169</sup> The jealous 'Bettelvogt' not only almost kills his wife, but also imprisons his rival 'in tiefen tiefen Turm bei Wasser und bei Brot'. Walter sings the song three times in the novel, twice for the family and once at Kranzler's party. See AW IV p. 100, 197 and pp. 228-229 and also Clemens Brentano, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. by Jürgen Behrens and others (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1975-), VI: *Des Knaben Wunderhorn I*, ed. by Heinz Rölleke, pp. 94-95.

daughter. In Nabl's novel, the narrator tells us that Walter Ortlieb's love of music began when he first overheard the sound of street-musicians playing outside his window.<sup>170</sup> Later on, in the chapter entitled 'Die andere Welt', Walter's lute playing arouses the attention of Fräulein Kranzler in the apartment above him, who subsequently invites him upstairs to an artists' gathering. In both of these instances, music crosses the spatial boundaries separating Walter from other people, uniting the audience with the musician and offering a way out of isolation. This is expressed neatly by the former actor, Professor Swoboda, who gives a speech welcoming Walter to Kranzler's party:

Diese beiden Welten, meine Damen und Herren, die hier auf so engen Raum zusammengedrängt und nur, wie ich schon bemerkt zu haben glaube, durch eine schwach übertünchte Lage von Schutt und Moder getrennt sind, mußten natürlich früher oder später aufeinanderstoßen. [...] In den beiden Heerlagern erhoben sich die Stimmen des Widerstreites gegeneinander, sie klangen von unten nach oben, von oben nach unten. [...] Inmitten dieses – ich bitte, meine Worte jetzt wieder rein symbolisch zu nehmen – dieses Kampfgetümmels begann es aber, aus dem Lager des Bürgertums heimlich und leise aufzuklingen, erst nur ganz zaghaft wie der Schlag eines scheuen, ängstlichen Vogels, allmählich aber herzhafter und kräftiger, bis er an unsere Ohren drang – und siehe, wir erkannten den sehnsuchtsvollen Ruf einer verwandten Seele, eines Bruders, den es, ohne daß er vielleicht selbst wußte, zu unserer freien, sonnigen Höhen emporlockte. (AW IV, 224-225)

This passage is, of course, not without irony, since Swoboda is drunk, and his colleagues' bawdy dancing and singing is hardly worthy of the lofty associations with high art implied by his speech. Nevertheless, Swoboda's inebriated rhetoric provides a fitting illustration of the liberating effects of music explored elsewhere in Nabl's novel. The

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<sup>170</sup> See AW IV, p. 16. Jakob in Grillparzer's *Der arme Spielmann* also recounts a similar anecdote about his first encounter with the joy of music, motivating him to play the violin: 'Das Lied unten im Hofe und die Töne von meinen Fingern an mein Ohr, Mitbewohner meiner Einsamkeit', GSW III, p. 162.

guarded insularity of the Ortlieb family, physically enclosed within the walls of the apartment, is penetrated by music's disregard for spatial and social boundaries, bringing Walter out of his cocoon and allowing him to experience, at least temporarily, a less restricted way of life.<sup>171</sup> If bourgeois family life is portrayed as deathly in Nabl's novel, then music, however humble, is associated with vitality and release from the constraints of the home.

Indeed, even at his lowest ebb, Walter, like Gregor Samsa, finds in music a source of ultimate sustenance. Imprisoned in his underground dungeon, Walter picks up his lute and begins to play, evoking in every note the happy memories of his past. In his captivity, he is able, for the first time ever, to surrender himself entirely to his desires and fantasies without the feelings of guilt and fear of retribution which has previously accompanied them. Even though he is physically separated from human society, engaged in the cellar like an animal, Walter's music enables him to overcome his fears and anguish, transcending the bonds of time and place to evoke in his mind's eye the cherished memories of the past. In a moment of ultimate ambivalence, his physical imprisonment becomes the site of his emotional release:

So kamen alle Menschen, die Walters Spiel und Gesang einst erfreut hatte, zu ihm in den Keller des einsamen Hauses, um ihm in der schwersten, bittersten Stunde seines Lebens zu helfen. Und wenn sie auch nur im Traum, nur in der Erinnerung auf ihn zuschwebten und ihn umringten, mit ihm sprachen und freundlich zu ihm waren, die Lieder, die er ihnen zum Dank dafür gab, klangen so voll wie einst vor Monaten, vor Jahren in Wirklichkeit. Jetzt hielt er seine Laute fest im Arm, er strich nicht nur zaghaft über ihre Saiten, er schlug sie mutig an und sang dazu mit warmer, tönender Stimme. In ein Grab

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<sup>171</sup> Music also has an invigorating effect on the Brandeis' family life in *Ödhof*. See AW III, p. 291 and Chapter 2 above.

hatte man ihn gestoßen, aber das, was einst sein kurzes Glück gewesen war, hatte man mit ihm begraben, und hier in dem dunklen, schweigenden Gewölbe feierte es eine helle, klingende Auferstehung. (AW IV, 416)<sup>172</sup>

The pathology inherent in claustrophobic family relationships, Nabl's novel demonstrates, can be inextricable, yet music, as a symbol of art, offers a form of deliverance. It might, if we are lucky, have the potential to make family life bearable.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, *Das Grab des Lebendigen* reveals much about the emotional power structures within the traditional family and their hidden potential for perversion. By uncovering the cracks and fissures which threaten to undermine the apparent self-sufficiency of family life, Nabl's novel demands to be recognized as an integral text in a long line of important Austrian works engaging with domestic crisis. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, this tradition tends to trace the crisis of family back to a number of key motifs, such as the consequences of patriarchal tyranny and abuse, the hermetic insularity of domestic life and the tendency towards obsession, inadequate emotional development and isolation which this often produces. Nabl's *Das Grab des Lebendigen* draws on these common aspects, as I have shown, to produce arguably the most detailed and sustained critique of bourgeois ideals of domesticity in Austrian realist fiction. This critical thrust is especially remarkable because scholars have tended to regard Austrian realism, in

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<sup>172</sup> On this scene see also Schmidt-Dengler, 'Franz Nabl und die Literaturgeschichte', p.19.

general, as homely and uncritical, contrasting it with both the mainstream European tradition of critical realism, and the high modernism which allegedly superseded it. It is even more striking, when we consider that Nabl's writing has, at best, been regarded as old-fashioned, and, at worst, inaccurately associated with trivial *Heimat* literature.<sup>173</sup> Nabl's *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, I have attempted to show, thoroughly disavows these preconceptions.

Indeed, even though Nabl's novel shares many parallels with Stifter's 'Turmalin', its subtle probing of the psychological mechanisms and deep-seated patterns of emotional dependency at work in the family unit, connects it at least as closely to the modernist concerns of Kafka's *Die Verwandlung*. *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, then, is a work which crosses epochal and stylistic boundaries, urging us to ponder their limitations. This becomes even more apparent, if we take into account the degree to which Nabl's thematic preoccupations also animate later Austrian writers. Be it in the grotesque characters populating the works of the Nobel laureates Elias Canetti and Elfriede Jelinek, in the embittered oeuvre of Thomas Bernhard, or in the blunt realism of 'Anti-Heimat' novels, such as Franz Innerhofer's *Schöne Tage* (1974) or even Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück* (1972), the unbroken pattern of Austrian texts exploring the crisis of family continues to survive changes in literary taste. Read in this context, *Das Grab des Lebendigen* appears not as an anachronistic realist novel, outdated in the era of modernism, but as a surprisingly central text in the Austrian literary tradition, urgently in need of re-discovery.

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<sup>173</sup> See Magris, p. 162 and 332.

## Chapter 4

### Narrating Country Life: Franz Nabl and the Literary-Historical Problem of *Heimat* Literature in Austria

#### Introduction: Regionalism and *Heimat* in Austrian Literary History

In his detailed history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Austrian literature, Adalbert Schmidt introduces Franz Nabl by remarking: ‘Daß Heimat nicht immer der Ort der Herkunft sein muß, dafür ist Franz Nabl ein beredtes Beispiel.’<sup>174</sup> The statement is paradigmatic for post-war attempts to restore Nabl’s literary reputation in broadly two ways. Firstly, by associating Nabl from the outset with the notion of *Heimat*, Schmidt immediately places his work in a regional perspective. Secondly, however, by stressing that Nabl’s concept of *Heimat* is not limited to his geographical place of birth and instead denotes a personal or emotional connection to any given location or landscape, Schmidt implicitly aims to rescue the regionalist writer Nabl by contrasting his universal, even cosmopolitan values with the narrow, particularist and even racist overtones typical of the ‘völkisch’ notion of *Heimat* predominant in the years before and during the Third

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<sup>174</sup> Adalbert Schmidt, *Dichtung und Dichter Österreichs im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols (Salzburg: Bergland, 1964), II, p. 63.

Reich.<sup>175</sup> Schmidt's emphasis on Nabl's affinity with Styria, his so-called 'wahre Heimat' as opposed to his place of birth, is thus also to be understood against the background of the author's earlier appropriation by the National Socialist critics, such as Josef Nadler, who viewed literary works as expressions of a writer's geographical and ethnic roots.<sup>176</sup>

While the drawbacks of Nadler's ethnological literary history require little comment, the post-war approach, characterized by Schmidt, hardly produces a more balanced view of Nabl's writing. In an attempt to rehabilitate Nabl, he overemphasizes his weaker later work. In doing so, he creates an image of the author as an uncomplicated, elderly sage of the Austrian province, employing clichéd comparisons with Stifter which do neither writer justice and merely serve to raise the suspicion among the uninitiated that Nabl's work might actually be restricted to trivial pastoral. The rhetorical tactic described here belongs, of course, to a broader trend in the post-war discourse of *Heimat*, where the Nazis' politicized appropriation of the provinces was replaced with a renewed idealization of country life as unproblematic and wholesome. This is especially apparent, for example, in the highly popular kitschy *Heimat* films of the

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<sup>175</sup> See Hans Weigel, 'Ein Klassiker zu Lebzeiten', *Die Presse*, 16 July 1973 and Schmidt, 'Der Altmeister österreichischer Erzählkunst', *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 14 July 1973. Both quoted in Hilde Spiel (ed.), *Die zeitgenössische Literatur Österreichs* (Zürich, Munich: Kindler, 1976), p. 263. Cf. also Schmidt-Dengler, 'Franz Nabl und die Literaturgeschichte', p. 14.

<sup>176</sup> Nabl was born in Bohemia and Nadler's massive literary history accordingly treats him in a section devoted to writers from Bohemia and Moravia. See Josef Nadler, *Literaturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes. Dichtung und Schrifttum der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften*, 4 vols (Berlin: Pröpyläen, 1941), IV, p. 492.

1950s, with titles such as *Echo der Berge* (1954) or *Die Sennerin von St Kathrein* (1955).<sup>177</sup>

Many writers, such as Nabl, who had been active before the war and also enjoyed a degree of favour from the National Socialist regime, were frequently re-stylized by conservative literary critics after 1945 as aesthetically traditional, unpolitical, and harmonious regional writers. This process had the unfortunate effect of blurring the distinctions between authors of often contrasting aesthetic value and ideological convictions. Nabl as a 'regional' writer has thus hardly been distinguished from the exponents of regressive Blut und Boden literature, such as Karl Heinrich Waggerl, or committed Nazis such as Hans Klopfer, although their literary work had very little in common with Nabl's own earlier fiction.<sup>178</sup> The worryingly effective cultural amnesia of the general reading public, which allowed the dubious political heritage of writers like Waggerl and Klopfer to be forgotten by all but a few literary historians, has done little to help matters. That empirical studies carried out in the 1970s identify Waggerl (alongside Peter Rosegger) as the most widely read of all Austrian writers in the post-war period,

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<sup>177</sup> For a brief survey of post-war Austrian Heimat film see Joseph McVeigh, 'Popular Culture in Austria, 1945-2000' in Katrin Kohl and Ritchie Robertson (eds), *A History of Austrian Literature 1918-2000* (Camden House, 2006), pp. 247- 263 (pp. 256-257). On their West German counterparts see Boa and Palfreyman, pp. 86-102.

<sup>178</sup> For a detailed analysis of Nabl's literary and personal associations with National Socialism and National Socialists see Chapter 5. A central barrier to Nabl's literary rehabilitation has been his friendship with writers of lesser talent, and dubious political allegiance, such as Klopfer who notoriously penned a Styrian dialect poem praising Hitler.

shows just how effective this blanket trivialization of writers depicting rural life has been.<sup>179</sup>

This poses two major problems for scholars aiming to provide a more objective account of Austrian literary history. The first issue is one of periodization. Until quite recently non-canonical texts treating a rural milieu have tended to be marginalized under the vague label *Heimatroman*. This term, however, is in need of much greater differentiation. In order to understand the social, cultural and historical dimensions of these texts it is necessary to develop a keener understanding of the chronological development of literature dealing with the provinces. Waggerl and Rosegger, for example, belong to two clearly distinct phases in the cultural discourse of *Heimat*, and in the literary history of the politically and aesthetically conservative *Heimatroman* genre.<sup>180</sup> Nabl's writing stretches from the early 1900s to the post-1945 period and thus his earliest and latest works appeared in and relate to very different socio-historical and cultural-political contexts.

Secondly, and more importantly, it is necessary to scrutinize the widespread and inaccurate stereotype that *Heimat* novels amount to trivial kitsch, and that all broadly realist fictions of provincial and rural life since the late nineteenth century can be

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<sup>179</sup> See Karlheinz Rossbacher, 'Die Provinz, der Bauer und die Heimat in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts' in *Heimat: Referate und Ergebnisse einer Tagung in der Evangelischen Akademie Nordelbien, Bad Segeberg vom 25. bis 27. November 1977*, ed. by Joachim Kruse and Klaus Juhl (Schleswig: Schleswiger Dr.- u. Verl.-Haus, 1978), pp. 127-151 (p. 144). Rossbacher refers to the results of empirical research circulated as Walter Hömberg and Karlheinz Rossbacher, *Lesen auf dem Lande. Literarische Rezeption und Mediennutzung im ländlichen Siedlungsgebiet Salzburgs* (Vervielf. MS Salzburg, 1977).

<sup>180</sup> On the various phases of German *Heimat* discourse see Boa and Palfreyman, pp. 1-17. Uwe K. Ketelsen provides a useful diachronic treatment of 'völkisch-conservative' writing in Ketelsen, *Völkisch-nationale und nationalsozialistische Literatur in Deutschland 1890-1945* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976).

adequately described as *Heimat* literature. While many works which might properly be considered *Heimat* novels have unexpected literary merits, there are still other realist texts set in the countryside which engage with the stereotypes of *Heimatkunst* only to subvert and disappoint them. Nabl's best work – I shall argue – belongs firmly to the latter category. Yet this can only be appreciated by contrasting Nabl's fictions of provincial life with work more closely connected to the *Heimat* mode and situating this analysis in the context of a varied range of contemporary discourses of town and country. By considering how a number of Nabl's early works reflect on and even challenge aspects of these discourses, and by comparing them to Peter Rosegger's *Heimat* novel *Jakob der Letzte*, the critical investigations in this chapter are intended to sharpen our appreciation of the distinction between *Heimat* literature and works of critical realism merely set in the provinces. This should not occur at the expense of trivializing Rosegger's text, which is – I aim to demonstrate – worthy of critical attention in its own right. Rather, it is intended to indicate a fruitful way of approaching and rehabilitating unjustly neglected turn-of-the-century fictions of rural life, which have all too often been stigmatized unfairly by loose and misleading notions of the nature and scope of *Heimat* literature.<sup>181</sup>

### **Town and Province in Nineteenth-Century Sociological and Literary Discourse**

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<sup>181</sup> Boa and Palfreyman's study *Heimat: A German Dream* marks an important step towards the rehabilitation of German *Heimat* literature. A comparable study of the Austrian context has yet to be written.

Beginning in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions, Germany and Austria were subject to a series of wide-reaching social changes, intensifying as the century progressed, which can loosely be understood as the process of modernization.<sup>182</sup> The key developments were industrialization and especially urbanization, which saw the population of Berlin rise from 400,000 inhabitants in 1850 to two million by 1910.<sup>183</sup> Vienna experienced an almost identical rate of growth in same period with the population rising from just over 430,000 in 1850 to 2,083,500 in 1910.<sup>184</sup>

These trends brought about radical alterations to the fabric of traditional society which fascinated and unsettled intellectuals across Europe in equal measure, becoming the central focus of the burgeoning academic discipline of sociology. The most prominent German example is Ferdinand Tönnies's treatise *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887). In this influential work, Tönnies distinguishes between two fundamental ideal types of society, drawing, at least in part, on his own experience of the impact of social change on rural Schleswig-Holstein during his youth.<sup>185</sup> The construction of these ideal types, where 'Gemeinschaft' stands for traditional rural society based on communal ties and family life as the backbone of unity, which disintegrates into modern 'Gesellschaft', characterized

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<sup>182</sup> See David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany 1780-1918* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 175-351.

<sup>183</sup> See Boa and Palfreyman, p. 2.

<sup>184</sup> See Ernst Bruckmüller, *Sozialgeschichte Österreichs* (Vienna: Herold, 1985), p. 369 and p. 371. Bruckmüller's statistic for 1910 is based on the metropolitan area of modern-day Vienna. For details on changes to Vienna's city limits in the period see *ibid.*, p. 371 and Peter Csendes, *Geschichte Wiens* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1981), pp. 124-126.

<sup>185</sup> See Charles P. Loomis and John C. McKinney, 'Introduction' in Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society* (New York: Dover, 2002), pp. 1-29 (p. 1) and Jose Harris, 'General Introduction' in Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, ed. by Jose Harris, trans. by Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. ix-xxx (p. xi).

by the growing dominance of city life dictated by the concerns of industry, trade and individualism, provides a descriptive theoretical framework for the central antagonism between rural life and the urban modernity which had been developing during the course of the century.<sup>186</sup> The consequences of urbanization for both the overarching social structure and the plight of the individual were also investigated by French sociologists around 1890. The most notable of these were Gabriel Tarde, whose study *Les lois de l'imitation* (1890) addressed the problem of social disorientation experienced by new migrants from the countryside in adapting to metropolitan life, and, above all, Émile Durkheim, author of the classic analysis of the social causes of suicide, *Le suicide* (1897).<sup>187</sup>

Durkheim's aetiology of suicide responds to the basic problem of Tarde's analysis in formulating the notion of chronic social 'anomie', which he considers a condition of modern existence. Durkheim maintains that in modern urban society secularization had weakened the sustaining effects of religion and the regulation of economic life by occupational groups had given way to unbridled economic competition. Since nothing had replaced these regulatory institutions, individuals were left with unlimited expectations which must inevitably be disappointed, producing widespread suffering and

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<sup>186</sup> See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*, 8<sup>th</sup> edn (Leipzig: Hans Buske, 1935), esp. pp. 241-256.

<sup>187</sup> The work of Tarde and Durkheim is discussed in relation to Austrian fiction by William M. Johnston, 'Peter Rosegger: ein Leben zwischen Stadt und Land, ein Jubiläum zwischen Wechsel und Dauer' in *Peter Rosegger im Kontext*, ed. by Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler and Karl Wagner (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999), pp. 14-25 (p. 18).

discontent, which could lead to suicidal tendencies.<sup>188</sup> Durkheim supports this thesis by citing statistical data outlining the number of suicides per million divided by profession, and concludes:

Industrial and commercial functions are really among the occupations which furnish the greatest number of suicides. [...] They are especially more afflicted than agriculture, where the old regulative forces still make their appearance felt most and where the fever of business has least penetrated.<sup>189</sup>

While it is clear that Durkheim's conclusions aim to reflect the statistics available to him, the terms of his argument are significant. His explanation essentially reproduces the important dichotomy between traditional rooted life in the provinces and the inherent perils of urban modernity within objective scientific discourse, thereby revealing the extent to which this manner of understanding the division between town and country was embedded in the intellectual consciousness of late nineteenth-century Europe.

In Germany, this perceived polarity between town and country played a central role in the programmatic and theoretical writings produced by literary and cultural critics associated with the *Heimatkunstabewegung*, such as Julius Langbehn, Adolf Bartels and Friedrich Lienhard.<sup>190</sup> Radicalizing both the content and language of Nietzsche's critique of modernity and decadence, these programmatic ideologues rejected the literature of urban modernism and Naturalism and advocated, instead, a renewal of Germanic art

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<sup>188</sup> See Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson, ed. by George Simpson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 254-258.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>190</sup> On the German 'Heimatkunstabewegung' see Karlheinz Roszbacher, *Heimatkunstabewegung und Heimatroman. Zu einer Literatursoziologie der Jahrhundertwende* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975), esp. pp. 25-65. Useful overviews are also offered by Ketelsen, pp. 36-40 and Boa and Palfreyman, pp. 31-41.

which would champion provincial life and celebrate the supposedly organic relationship between the German peasant and his land.<sup>191</sup> In doing so, they promoted the literary evocation of static traditional communities closely mirroring Tönnies' contemporary sociological concept of 'Gemeinschaft', as a counter-balance for the fears and anxieties connected to the experience of modernity.<sup>192</sup>

The overwhelming prestige of fin-de-siècle Viennese modernism has often effectively blacked out the existence of the Austrian equivalent to German *Heimatkunst*, known as *Provinzkunst*.<sup>193</sup> Yet this culturally significant literary countermovement had much in common with its German counterpart. *Provinzkunst* shared, for example, the virulent anti-modernism, anti-urbanism and anti-intellectualism characteristic of texts such as Langbehn's *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (1890) and Lienhard's 'Los von Berlin?' (1901). In some respects, such as its frequently pronounced anti-clericalism and

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<sup>191</sup> For examples of Nietzsche's critique of decadence see esp. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), VI: *Der Fall Wagner*. On Langbehn's appropriation of Nietzschean style in *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Leipzig: Hirschfeld, 1890) see Boa and Palfreyman, p. 38.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Hugo Keiper, 'Die Welt der Bauern im Roman "Ödhof"' in *Über Franz Nabl*, pp. 63-81 (pp. 64-65). The ideology of the 'Heimatkunstbewegung' could also draw on the work of Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, the founding father of academic 'Volkskunde', who condemned industrialization and urban migration, and championed the farming class (alongside the nobility) as a pillar of social stability. On Riehl see Rossbacher, *Heimatkunstbewegung*, p. 43, Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Landleben im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1987), p. 382 and Jasper von Altenbockum, *Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl 1823-1897. Sozialwissenschaft zwischen Kulturgeschichte und Ethnographie* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1994), esp. pp. 167-187.

<sup>193</sup> On *Provinzkunst* see Karlheinz Rossbacher, 'Provinzkunst: A Countermovement to Viennese Culture', pp. 23-31 and Johann Holzner, 'Das Haus als Hölle. Zur Provinzliteratur um 1900' in "*Kakanien*": *Aufsätze zur österreichischen und ungarischen Literatur, Kunst und Kultur um die Jahrhundertwende*, ed. by Eugen Thurnher and others (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991), pp. 177-197.

‘völkisch’ nationalism, it was even more radical.<sup>194</sup> The movement had numerous centres in the German-speaking provinces of the Habsburg Empire. Notable strongholds were Graz, home of Rosegger’s journal *Der Heimgarten*, Linz where Hugo Greinz’s journal *Der Kyffhäuser* was published, as well as the Tyrol, where the literary group Young Tyrol around Franz Kranewitter, Karl Schönherr and Rudolf Greinz, and the journal *Der Scherer*, which issued much of their work, were based.<sup>195</sup>

Strikingly, though, *Provinzkunst* first became well known among the educated public through the efforts in Vienna of Hermann Bahr, the self-consciously modern writer and journalist responsible for creating and establishing both the notion and high status of Jung-Wien only a few years earlier. In an essay entitled ‘Die Entdeckung der Provinz’ (1899), Bahr asked rhetorically: ‘Gibt es denn in Oesterreich wirklich nichts mehr als ewig das süße Mädel von Schnitzler, [...] und die paar sonderbaren Laute einer äußersten, ja sublimen, aber schon fast kaum mehr faßlichen Verfeinerung, die Hofmannsthal hat? Ist das unser ganzes Oesterreich?’<sup>196</sup> The answer, he hoped, might be provided by a *Provinzkunst* to rival Viennese modernism, offering an accurate account of the realities and idiosyncrasies of rural life. These dreams were nourished by the early programmatic statements of *Provinzkünstler*, such as Hugo Greinz, whom Bahr quotes extensively in his essay:

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<sup>194</sup> See Roszbacher, ‘Die Provinz, der Bauer und die Heimat...’, p. 133. Holzner’s claim that *Provinzkunst* had a closer affinity to Naturalism than German *Heimatkunst* is only sustained by the work of Franz Kranewitter, essentially Holzner’s sole example. Roszbacher’s essay ‘*Provinzkunst: A Countermovement to Viennese Culture*’ provides a broader range of evidence to the contrary.

<sup>195</sup> Roszbacher, ‘*Provinzkunst: A Countermovement to Viennese Culture*’, p. 23.

<sup>196</sup> Hermann Bahr, ‘Die Entdeckung der Provinz’ in *Das Junge Wien. Österreichische Literatur- und Kunstkritik 1887-1902*, 2 vols, ed. by Gotthart Wunberg (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976), II, pp. 1011-1016 (p. 1013). Henceforth cited in text as BEP with page numbers.

Wir fordern in den Werken unserer Provinz auch das wirkliche Leben derselben, so wie es sich hundert- und tausendfältig unterscheidet von dem der großen Städte. [...] Die Provinzliteratur soll uns Charaktere zeichnen, die in den vielen Einflüssen provinzieller Umgebung entstanden und aufgewachsen sind, sie soll uns die Stimmung geben, die an ein bestimmtes Land, an eine bestimmte Stadt gebunden ist – ihre Werke sollen Provinzluft athmen! (BEP, 1012)

However, while the surface of Greinz's passage appeals to a kind of provincial Naturalism, aiming to reproduce aesthetically the reality of country life, closer scrutiny actually reveals the antagonistic undercurrent common to much Austrian and German *Provinz-* and *Heimatkunst*. The literary treatment of life in the countryside is always defined by its difference to the city.<sup>197</sup> This distinction between town and country, evident in the first line of Greinz's statement, is central to the programme he wishes to outline. He continues, for example, by arguing: 'Unsere kleine Cultur, die ruhige Poesie unseres Lebens in einem Milieu, das dem der Großstädte fremd und entlegen ist, verlangt nach einer Darstellung' (BEP, 1012). The association with Naturalism, implied by the term 'Milieu', is undermined by the emotive 'ruhige Poesie unseres Lebens' which suggests quite clearly that rural life is to be preferred, if not idealized, in comparison to life in the city. Indeed, only a few lines later, Greinz turns to a portrayal of semi-provincial Linz which employs a host of the stock motifs of *Heimat* kitsch:

Eine Stadt, mitten hinein gesetzt in die Gebiete der Bauern – hinter den letzten Häusern, die schon das Strohdach zeigen, schneidet der Pflug in die Erde, ringsum blühen Gärten,

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<sup>197</sup> On this issue see Friedrich Sengle, 'Wunschbild Land und Schreckbild Stadt. Zu einem zentralen Thema der neueren deutschen Literatur' in *Europäische Bukolik und Georgik*, ed. by Klaus Garber (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), pp. 432-460 (esp. p. 436).

und ein guter Teil der Bewohner ist bäuerisch. Bäuerisch im Leben und in der Gesinnung. (BEP, 1012)

Thatched rooftops, the tilling of the soil, blossoming gardens and above all the implicit championing of the peasant farmer, all of these elements contribute to an idealized rather than realistic image of the provinces. That Bahr, who champions Greinz's aims, failed to recognize this is perhaps a testament to the widespread tendency in various strands of contemporary scientific and intellectual discourse to set rural life against urban modernity, romanticizing the former in direct reaction to the troubled experience of the latter. As this section has shown, this was no means limited to literary theory, but extended to ethnology, cultural criticism and even empirical sociology. Regardless of the objectivity of their scientific analysis, even the explanatory approaches taken by sociologists such as Tarde and Durkheim, for example, remained implicitly committed to the basic assumption that the countryside retained a distinct distance from the problems of modernity. While the majority of fictional works produced by the new generation of Austrian *Provinzkünstler* largely reinforced this distinction between town and country, it is, however, wrong to assume that all literary depictions of the provinces at the turn of the century naively portrayed rural life as untouched by or distanced from the problems of modern life. In fact, even the work of Peter Rosegger, the most famous and successful of Austrian *Heimat* writers, contains counter-examples which urge us to re-think the stereotypical view of the *Heimatroman* genre as trivial kitsch.

**The Plight of the Provincial Farmer: Suicide and Rural Decline in Peter Rosegger's  
*Jakob der Letzte***

Though he was widely admired by both contemporary writers and the reading public, scholars have generally regarded the Styrian writer Peter Rosegger either as a trivial *Heimat* writer of little aesthetic merit, or, more commonly, ignored his writing completely.<sup>198</sup> This lack of critical interest is justified, to an extent, by many of Rosegger's literary works which prefigure the dominant turn-of-the-century mode of *Heimat* kitsch in their uncomplicated and idealistic depictions of Alpine life.<sup>199</sup> Nevertheless, Rosegger notably distanced himself from the leading ideologues of the German *Heimatkunst* movement, especially with his critical review of Langbehn's *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, and was criticized by Adolf Bartels for the absence of 'völkisch' sentiment in his writing.<sup>200</sup> His contribution to the debate on Austrian *Provinzkunst*, the essay 'Kunst und Provinz' (1899) commissioned by Hermann Bahr, also reveals significant differences from younger provincial writers, such as Hugo Greinz and Ottokar

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<sup>198</sup> For example, Saar wrote to Ebner-Eschenbach on 20 January 1905 placing Rosegger among the leading writers of the Liberal era in Austria. See Heinz Kindermann (ed.), *Briefwechsel zwischen Ferdinand von Saar und Maria von Ebner-Eschenbach* (Vienna: Wiener Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft, 1957), p. 140. On Rosegger's minimal scholarly reception see Uwe Baur, 'Peter Rosegger in der Wissenschaft' in *"Fremd gemacht": Der Volksschriftsteller Peter Rosegger*, ed. by Uwe Baur and others (Vienna: Böhlau, 1988), pp. 11-24.

<sup>199</sup> For example see the idealized portraits of various country types in Peter Rosegger, *Die Älpler* [1881] (Leipzig: Staackmann, n.d.) or his later novel *Erdsegen* (Leipzig: Staackmann, 1900) where an urban journalist spends a year as an Alpine farmhand for a bet but eventually ends up liking the simplicity of rural life so much that he marries a farmer's daughter and remains in the countryside.

<sup>200</sup> See Rossbacher, *Heimatkunstabewegung*, p. 23 and p. 86.

Stauf von der March (the pseudonym of *Der Scherer's* editor Fritz Chalupka).<sup>201</sup> While Rosegger makes no secret of his sympathies, stressing that the isolation of the countryside is more conducive to reflection and poetic creativity and that the provinces are thus by no means inferior to or less cultivated than the city, his anti-urbanism lacks the bitter resentment evident in poems, such as 'Wien' and 'Absage', published in *Der Scherer* in the same year.<sup>202</sup>

Indeed, in the novel *Jakob der Letzte*, Rosegger mixes elements of idealistic provincialism with a serious attempt to depict rural decline. Announcing his intentions in the book's foreword, he maintains: 'Dieses Werk hat einen tieferen Sinn als den, bloß zu unterhalten. Es soll eine auffallende und wichtige Erscheinung der Gegenwart schildern, es soll ein Bild geben vom Untergange des Bauerntums in unseren Alpen' (RW IV, 9). This statement, which places the literary reproduction of contemporary social reality in the foreground, seemingly separates the work from the typical *Heimat* mode, recalling the programmatic aims of the Naturalist movement. Moreover, Rosegger's use of the suicide motif in the text creates a parallel with the tradition of Naturalism, most notably illustrated by the frequent depiction of suicide in the early plays of Gerhart Hauptmann, such as *Vor Sonnenaufgang* and *Einsame Menschen* (1890). However, while suicide in these plays typically functions as a means of escape from individual existential problems linked to the constraints of milieu, hereditary degeneration and marriage, Rosegger's use

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<sup>201</sup> See Peter Rosegger, 'Kunst und Provinz' in Rosegger, *Volksreden über Fragen und Klagen, Zagen und Wagen der Zeit* (Berlin: Kantorowicz, 1908), pp. 150-157 and Rossbacher, 'Provinzkunst: A Countermovement to Viennese Culture', p. 24.

<sup>202</sup> See Rosegger, 'Kunst und Provinz', p. 152 and p. 155 and Rossbacher, 'Provinzkunst: A Countermovement to Viennese Culture', pp. 24-26.

of the motif is connected to his portrayal of the disintegration of Alpine agricultural society in late nineteenth-century Austria.<sup>203</sup>

The historical process of rural decline during the period has its roots in the agrarian crisis, which resulted largely from the development of international economic competition from both the Americas and Eastern Europe, reducing the ability of the Habsburg Empire to export agricultural products.<sup>204</sup> Since the advent of steam-powered freight had improved transport links both on land and water, more corn was available on the European market at lower prices, which hit many producers hard. Nevertheless, despite falling prices and increased competition, agriculture in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy continued to grow rapidly, responding to the flooding of the European market by products from Russia and overseas in the 1880s and 1890s by focusing on selling its produce in Austria. This internal competition placed great strain on areas of southern and north-eastern Austria, such as Rosegger's native Mürz valley, especially following the removal of tariffs to block the import of cheaper Hungarian grain into Austria in 1851.<sup>205</sup> Moreover, this crisis was combined with the consequences of the removal of the pre-industrial conditions of serfdom in Austria and Germany following the revolutions of 1848. This development subjected the often uneducated farmers to the forces of the market in an increasingly capitalist and industrial age. Indeed, changes in

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<sup>203</sup> On Hauptmann see Karl S. Guthke and Hans M. Wolff, *Das Leid im Werk Gerhart Hauptmanns* (Bern: Francke, 1958), pp. 19-20.

<sup>204</sup> See Karl Dinklage, 'Die landwirtschaftliche Entwicklung' in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, ed. by Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1973-), I: *Die Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung*, ed. by Alois Brusatti (1973), pp. 403-462 (p. 420).

<sup>205</sup> See Gerald Schöpfer, 'Peter Rosegger: Ein glaubwürdiger Zeuge wirtschafts- und sozialgeschichtlicher Veränderung?', in *"Fremd gemacht": Der Volksschriftsteller Peter Rosegger*, ed. by Uwe Baur and others (Vienna: Böhlau, 1988), pp. 25-42 (p. 29).

laws governing both inheritance and money-lending in the late 1860s exposed farmers to the temptations of mobile capital and frequently resulted in the splitting of inherited lands, an increase in smallholding and ultimately of debt, destitution and migration to the cities.<sup>206</sup>

Rosegger reflects on elements of this socio-economic situation in *Jakob der Letzte*, emphasizing above all the damaging policies of large landowners, who aim to drive farmers from their land in order to replace their fields with woodland needed for recreational hunting, and the impact of the attractions of modern urban life, especially the introduction of money to sheltered Alpine communities. However, he also stresses how the farmers contributed to their own downfall by abandoning traditional values. This made them vulnerable to what Rosegger calls the ‘Krankheiten der Zeit [...], die Fähigkeit, der Größenwahn’ (RW IV, 11).<sup>207</sup> In drawing on the pathological language common to nineteenth-century critiques of decadence, Rosegger aligns himself with a central strand of contemporary discourse conventionally associated with the problems of urban modernity.<sup>208</sup> However, Rosegger’s appropriation of this discourse is unusual, since he transposes it into a rural environment, aiming to illustrate the effects of modernity in a provincial context, rather than presenting a timeless idyll untouched by historical development.

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<sup>206</sup> See Dinklage, pp. 422-423.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Karl Wagner, *Die literarische Öffentlichkeit der Provinzliteratur. Der Volksschriftsteller Peter Rosegger* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), p. 270.

<sup>208</sup> On decadence in *Jakob der Letzte* see E. Allen McCormick, ‘Decadence and “Heimatlidung”’: Peter Rosegger’s *Jakob der Letzte*’ in *Modern Austrian Literature*, 10/2 (1977), 31-36.

Rosegger was born as the son of a smallholding farmer in the Upper Styrian village of Alpl, and later moved to the provincial capital Graz, where he made a living from his literary and journalistic writings.<sup>209</sup> This situation informs his presentation of rural decline in *Jakob der Letzte*, motivating his solidarity with the farming class he had known at first hand in his youth. This is especially apparent in his idealization of the central character Jakob Steinreuter, who is conceived as a counterbalance to the moral decay of the other farmers in the text. As such, Rosegger depicts his hero through a series of organic metaphors, stressing the harmonious relationship between the sturdy Germanic peasant and the earth.<sup>210</sup> This is particularly apparent in the reader's first encounter with Jakob, who appears as a 'hochgewachsener Haus- und Familienvater, [...] der seine Kraft und seine Sorge und seine Liebe aus dem Boden zieht, auf dem er steht, und von seinem Haupte wieder niederspendet auf diesen Boden und auf alles, was darauf wächst und ihn umgibt' (RW IV, 14). This description reveals striking parallels with the language of later *Heimatkunst* ideologues such as Langbehn, and belongs to an aesthetic tactic aimed at vindicating Jakob's resistance to social change in the text. For this reason, comparable metaphors are employed by Jakob himself in condemning urban migration. This is neatly demonstrated in Jakob's appeal to Franz Guldeisner, the richest farmer in his native village, Altenmoos, to remain loyal to his roots and not to sell his farm:

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<sup>209</sup> For biographical information on Rosegger see Eva Philippoff, *Peter Rosegger: Dichter der verlorenen Scholle. Eine Biografie* (Graz: Styria, 1993).

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Karl Wagner, *Die literarische Öffentlichkeit der Provinzliteratur*, pp. 270-273.

Wenn du von deinem Hochwald einen frischen Lärchbaum versetzt hinaus ins Tal, mitsamt der Wurzel, und ihm dort die beste Erden gibst und den fettesten Dung, und Naß und Sonn, wie du willst — der Lärchbaum geht zugrund. Ein Gebirgsbaum laßt sich nicht versetzen; wenn er ausgewachsen ist, schon gar nicht. Ein Gebirgsmensch auch nicht. (RW IV, 42)

The positive association between nature and the Austrian peasantry is cast in direct opposition to the pathological terms in which social change is described in the text. This is evident in the work's foreword, where Rosegger sets up an opposition between health and sickness, traditional rooted life and urban degeneration,<sup>211</sup> and also appears in Jakob's interpretation of the fall of Altenmoos later in the novel, which mixes both medical and moral language:

Da kam die Pest der neuen Zeit, die Gewinn gier, der Streberwahn, da wurden die Menschen treulos gegen die Heimat und ihre Sitten, jagten hinaus in das Elend der grenzenlosen Welt. Die wenigen Zurückgebliebenen werden erdrückt von dem Eigennutz der Mächtigen. Ein großes Leben war aufgestanden in Altenmoos, ein großer Mord ist an ihm begangen worden. (RW IV, 203)<sup>212</sup>

Moreover, Rosegger's commitment to heightening the reader's sympathy for Jakob's plight is also reflected by the narrative structure of the text. Rosegger employs an episodic narrative framework, which attempts to cumulatively illustrate the arguments of the foreword, highlighting not only the processes by which the farmers succumb to the corruptive influence of modernity, but also how the machinations of the landowning class

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<sup>211</sup> See RW IV, p. 9.

<sup>212</sup> See Karl Wagner, *Die literarische Öffentlichkeit der Provinzliteratur*, p. 273.

force them into submission.<sup>213</sup> Yet the rigidity of this polemical structure is one of the major contradictions of Rosegger's work and detracts from the verisimilitude promised in the foreword. One by one, Rosegger shows that the farmers who leave Altenmoos all fall on hard times, and it soon becomes clear that the author's desire to provide a realistic portrayal of rural decline is biased by his conservative commitment to the values of traditional agricultural society. He draws on common socio-economic interpretations of the agrarian crisis, yet undermines them either by placing them in the mouth of the obnoxious forestry official Ladislaus, who represents the corruptive influence of modernity in the text, or rejecting them outright, as he does in the foreword:

‘Mit der Einfuhr von Feldfrüchten ist keine Konkurrenz mehr möglich.’ Das ist der Standpunkt des Händlers und nicht der des Bauern. Der Alpenbauer ist überhaupt nicht da, um zu ‘konkurrieren’, sondern um auf seinem Boden für sich zu arbeiten und zu leben. (RW IV, 11)<sup>214</sup>

Rosegger's treatment of Socialism in the text also appears naïve, especially when compared to other novels of rural decline in the period, such as the Saxon Wilhelm von Polenz's *Der Büttnerbauer*.<sup>215</sup> Indeed, Rosegger aims to dismiss Socialism in *Jakob der Letzte*, ignoring it altogether, except for one significant reference to Socialist ideology, where a former agricultural labourer, now employed in a rolling mill, writes a letter to his cousin in Altenmoos containing: ‘verworrenes Zeug von einer neuen Gerechtigkeit, von der roten Welt, von Besiegung des Kapitals, von Gleichteilung der Güter und so weiter.

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., pp. 269-270.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>215</sup> Socialism in Rosegger and Polenz is discussed by Peter Zimmermann, *Der Bauernroman: Antifeudalismus—Konservatismus—Faschismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1975), pp. 79-83.

“Sparen tun wir nicht”, schrieb er, “wenn’s kracht, kriegen wir eh genug”(RW IV, 105). This portrayal emphasizes the labourer’s lack of real understanding of the social maxims he espouses and stresses the greed and laziness which motivates their appeal in contrast to Polenz’s more differentiated treatment of the theme.

In *Der Büttnerbauer*, Gustav Büttner, the son of a destitute farmer, becomes increasingly attracted to Socialist ideology following his experience of modern capitalized forms of agriculture during a season as a so-called ‘Sachsengänger’, one of the many East Elbian agricultural workers who migrated to the West to find better paid seasonal employment during the late nineteenth century. He comes to recognize the unjust distribution of wealth in modern capitalist society and is shocked by the growing destitution of the new ‘fünfter Stand’, the homeless and disenfranchised whom he meets on his travels in the West, and even visits a Socialist rally.<sup>216</sup> In fact, Gustav is so affected by all these experiences that toward the end of the novel he is ready to leave his native village of Halbenau for the city:

Vor allem aber war eine tiefe Sehnsucht in ihn gekommen, die ihm keine Ruhe mehr ließ, die Sehnsucht, heraus zu gelangen aus der Enge seiner bisherigen Umgebung [...]. Diese Sehnsucht trieb ihn aus seiner Heimat weg, in die Stadt. Dort war das wahrhaftige Leben allein! (PBB, 348)

For Rosegger, such a positive judgement of the attractiveness of urban life was impossible, since it contradicted his polemical commitment to heightening the tragedy of

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<sup>216</sup> See Wilhelm von Polenz, *Der Büttnerbauer* (Bautzen: Lusatia, 1994), pp. 314- 316 and 348. Henceforth cited in text as PBB with page numbers.

rural decline by illustrating the damaging influence of urban modernity and its incompatibility with the nature of the Germanic peasantry.

However, despite the inherent drawbacks of his polemical approach, Rosegger's employment of the suicide motif in *Jakob der Letzte* distances the text from trivial examples of the later *Heimat* mode, most prominently represented by the best-selling novels of Ludwig Ganghofer.<sup>217</sup> The depiction of Jakob's suicide in the novel is of paramount importance, since it draws on and reformulates a central tenet of both scientific and literary discourse in the period, namely the connection between suicide and the conditions of urban modernity. Durkheim, for example, concluded in *Le suicide*: 'Suicide is much more urban than rural', relating increases in the suicide rate above all to the changes in the social structure experienced in modern society.<sup>218</sup> Strikingly, this view is reflected directly in Rosegger's novel by Jakob's loyal friend Pechöl-Natz:

'Umbringen — muß betrachten — umbringen tun sich mehr Leut draußen in der lustigen Welt als da im traurigen Bergwinkel.' 'Weil ihrer draußen mehr sind' wendete der Jakob ein. 'Nicht so, Jakob, nicht so [...]. Nach dem Perzent muß man's nehmen. Hab neulich erst gehört zu Sandeben, wie einer in der Zeitung gelesen, Stadtleut täten sich dreimal mehr umbringen als Landleut.' (RW IV, 197)

In the context of this discussion between Natz and Jakob, this quotation functions as an implicit attempt to justify their decision to remain true to their homeland in the face of growing pressure to uproot. However, when related to Jakob's suicide at the end of the novel, it underlines the damaging impact of contemporary social change on provincial

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<sup>217</sup> See Boa and Palfreyman, p. 36. Walther Killy's anthology *Deutscher Kitsch* includes a number of examples drawn from Ganghofer's work. See Killy, pp. 109-110 and pp. 145-147.

<sup>218</sup> Durkheim, p. 353.

life which is Rosegger's central theme in the work. In this sense, the suicide motif forms a focal point in the text, where the antagonisms between town and country, displayed linguistically through the opposition of metaphors of sickness and health, nature and civilization, converge to reveal the impossibility of separating the two spheres in the modern world. It also provides a powerful structural ending for Rosegger's episodic narrative, gesturing towards his aim of reproducing 'tragische Wirklichkeit' (RW IV, 9) in the text.<sup>219</sup>

Rosegger's desire to emphasize the heroism of his central protagonist means that the portrayal of Jakob's death must bear the mark of a moral victory, even if this goes unnoticed by society. While Ladislaus, whom Jakob kills shortly before drowning himself, is buried ceremoniously in the local graveyard, Jakob is hastily buried in the ravine, symbolically entitled 'Im Gottesfrieden' (RW IV, 221). Earlier in the novel, following his humiliating imprisonment for shooting a deer which had trespassed on his fields, Jakob rediscovers the harmony of man and nature, no longer viable in the village of Altenmoos, in the virgin wilderness of the ravine:

Er fühlte wieder das geheimnisvolle Band zwischen der äußeren Natur und dem Menschenherzen, und so trat er mit feierlichem, erhobenem Gemüte aus dem Felsengrund, genannt: Im Gottesfrieden. Nun wußte dieser durch sich und andere aus der menschlichen Gesellschaft gleichsam verbannte Mensch, wo seine Kirche stand. Im Gottesfrieden! Kein Tempel hat einen schöneren Namen. (RW IV, 202)

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<sup>219</sup> The popularity of the suicide motif in the Naturalist plays of Ibsen and Hauptmann can also be explained, in part, by such structural concerns.

This religious relationship with nature recurs in Natz's speech at Jakob's grave at the end of the novel, vindicating Jakob's moral victory:

Aber wart nur, bis wir aufstehen am Jüngsten Tag! Da wollen wir es ihnen schon zeigen, denen jenigen! Da wird's schon aufkommen, wer recht hat. [...] Der große Sämann hat dich in die Erde gelegt, so sollst jetzt schlafen, Jakob. Schlafen in der Altenmooser Erden, die dir das Liebste gewesen ist auf der Welt. (RW IV, 221)

In this sense, Jakob's suicide appears as a return to the maternal bosom of nature, underlining the organic relationship between the peasant and the earth, outlined especially in the religious rhetoric of the chapter 'Das heilige Kornfeld'.<sup>220</sup> Moreover, the nobility of choosing to die in one's homeland is indicated early in the text, following the disappearance of his son Jackerl: 'Wenn er in der Heimat sterben wollte, weil er [...] in der Heimat nicht leben konnte! — Die Tat wäre eines Jakob Steinreuter würdig' (RW IV, 70). However, Jackerl does not die in an attempt to flee the *Heimat* as the farmers initially assume, but instead moves to America, where he founds the village of Neu-Altenmoos.<sup>221</sup> While his emigration holds out hope for the continuation of Jakob's legacy, it also indicates the impossibility of traditional rural life in the changing conditions of modern Europe, which drive his aging father to suicide, contrasting the possibilities of the New World with the decay of Alpine agriculture.

Indeed, despite evident sentimental overtones, Jakob's death provocatively draws on the contemporary resonance of suicide in both literary and intellectual contexts,

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Wagner, *Die literarische Öffentlichkeit der Provinzliteratur*, p. 272.

<sup>221</sup> The motif of a fresh start in the New World also features in Gustav Frenssen's massively popular *Heimat* novel *Jörn Uhl* (1901) when the out of work farmhand Fiete Krey emigrates to America. In contrast to Jackerl Steinreuter, though, he eventually returns home a failure. See Frenssen, *Jörn Uhl* (Berlin: Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1902), p. 145, 293, 503 and also Boa and Palfreyman, p. 48.

simultaneously underlining the crisis facing rural communities and emphasizing the heroic and moral qualities of the novel's central character. While this latter aspect detracts significantly from the mimetic qualities of Rosegger's work, the engagement with contemporary rural decline, combined with the related use of the suicide motif, marks it out not only as a forebear of Polenz's more differentiated portrayal of rural decline in *Der Büttnerbauer*, which also ends with the suicide of its protagonist, the old farmer Traugott Büttner, but also as a striking reminder that not all Austrian *Heimat* novels deserve to be dismissed outright as uncritical bucolic idylls.

### **Debunking the Myth of Alpine Arcadia: Franz Nabl's 'Pastorale' (1911)**

Readers familiar only with Franz Nabl's semi-autobiographical eulogy of the Styrian landscape *Steirische Lebenswanderung* (1938) might be forgiven for thinking that the author is an inconsequential regionalist merely following in the more distinguished footsteps of Rosegger.<sup>222</sup> They might even take the title of Nabl's earliest story 'Pastorale' (written 1906, published 1911) as a straightforward indication of its genre. There is, after all, a scholarly tradition, going back to Friedrich Sengle, of viewing the rural literature of the bourgeois capitalist age as an extension of the classical pastoral.

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<sup>222</sup> On the distorted view of Nabl provided by his late work see Alfred Holzinger, 'Nachwort' in Nabl, *Die Zweite Heimat* (Graz: Leykam, 1963), pp. 227-238 (pp. 232-233): 'Wer eben nur die "Steirische Lebenswanderung" (1938), "Das Rasenstück" (1953) oder den "Erloschenen Stern" (1962), diesen ruhigen, nur ganz selten schmerzvollen Blick auf die eigene Kindheit und Jugend, kennt, [...] der weiß nicht um jenes Feuer, das in Abgründen schwelt, nicht um die Verzweiflung, die grenzenlos sein kann und alles verwandelt.' It was common for contemporary critics to praise Nabl's work as a continuation of an Austrian provincial tradition going back to Rosegger. See Franz Zach, 'Ein neuer österreichischer Erzähler', *Grazer Volksblatt* (27 March 1912).

According to this interpretation, the historical pastoral form and later *Heimat* writing both produce idealized images of the country, ignoring social realities.<sup>223</sup> Yet while this essentially holds true for the *Steirische Lebenswanderung*, Nabl's 'Pastorale' explicitly sets out to reveal the incompatibility of rural pastoral and the conditions of modern life, drawing on its generic conventions only to undermine them. In doing so, it develops a detached, even ironic critique of contemporary stereotypes of rural life, which clearly distinguishes it from even the best Austrian *Heimat* novels, such as Rosegger's *Jakob der Letzte*.

The text is set on an Alpine estate and its plot revolves around a brief love affair between the affluent young heir, Max von Schanda, and a peasant girl, Anna Schliffinger. Following an opening chapter devoted entirely to a description of the rural surroundings of Schanda's 'Sternbachhof', the second chapter ends with the protagonist's first meeting with Anna, who has recently returned from the town to live with her drunkard father. After a series of brief interludes which offer insights into Schanda's thoughts, and outline the diabolical lifestyle of Anna's father, Max and Anna have their first romantic encounter in a derelict pavilion in the estate's park.

In this central scene, Max tells Anna the tragic story behind the pavilion. The reader learns that it was built by a Hungarian count, Imre, the previous owner of the estate, as a secret meeting-place with his mother's French lady-in-waiting, Ninon, whom he was in love with. Imre's mother eventually discovered their liaison, and in her disapproval plotted to tear them apart. While Imre was away visiting his aunt, she slyly

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<sup>223</sup> See Sengle, p. 436.

informed Ninon that her son was to return with a bride, prompting Ninon to commit suicide. When Imre returned home, he banished his mother and buried Ninon in the park, spending hours by her grave every day until his death. After hearing this romantic tale, Anna allows Schanda to kiss her and then presumably make love to her. Only days later she is installed as a housekeeper at his estate, making the literal and metaphorical transition from village to 'castle' familiar to Austrian readers from Ludwig Anzengruber's *Der Sternsteinhof* (1885). However, Anna is unable to wrest control as successfully as the dominant Helene Zinshofer in Anzengruber's novel. Schanda's sexual attraction to Anna and his fondness for her does initially prompt him to briefly re-assess his views on the validity of class barriers in contemporary society, yet he is ultimately unable and unwilling to overcome the prospect of estrangement from his mother in the eyes of the world. This realization brings him to cease his favourable treatment of Anna's father, refusing him money and throwing him off his estate. While her father soon descends into alcoholic delirium and is sent to an asylum at Schanda's expense, Max breaks with Anna and she also leaves. In the final chapter, an extended narrated monologue allows the reader to observe how a spurned Anna contemplates the fate of her predecessor, Ninon, and makes the choice between committing suicide and returning to life in the town.

While the entire plot takes place either on or in the immediate locale of Schanda's country estate, Nabl is careful to counterbalance his depiction of this rural setting with references to the city, undercutting the pastoral's tendency toward idealization. This is apparent even in the opening lines of the text:

Man muß Wien mit der Westbahn verlassen und nach zweistündiger Fahrt die schmalspurige Zweigbahn benützen. Dann gelangt man in ein Mittelgebirgstal, das die Kälte und Starrheit der Bergwelt noch mit den Reizen einer freundlichen, ebenen Landschaft vereinigt. Ein breiter Bach führt sein klares Wasser mit scharfem Gefäll durch ein felsiges, keck geformtes Bett, die glänzenden Blätter der Sumpfdotterblumen drängen sich zwischen die breiten Fächer der Pestwurz, und dicht gewirktes Moos gibt den schmalen Uferbändern ein festes, zusammenhängendes Aussehen.<sup>224</sup>

In this passage, the narrator explicitly addresses the description of an idyllic scene in the Alpine foothills to an imaginary urban reader, travelling from Vienna's Westbahnhof into the countryside. The pastoral idyll presented here, where a clear stream cuts its way through the landscape fringed with summer flowers and firm mossy banks, is thereby linked to its function as a literary form which introduces the city-dweller to a simpler, less complicated existence in beautiful natural surroundings. The adjectives used to describe the banks 'fest' and 'zusammenhängend' evoke thus not only the realistic detail of the scene, but impose a preconceived interpretation onto the landscape. The riverbank appears firm and cohesive, just as rural 'Gemeinschaft' is perceived to lack the fragmentation of modern life in the city. As the narrator's description of this hypothetical journey to the Steinbachhof continues, the narrator implicitly acknowledges that the traveller's perception of the countryside is constructed by reference to his point of origin. Hence when the foothills give way to the more rugged, barren landscape of the higher

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<sup>224</sup> Franz Nabl, *Der Pavillon der Mamsell Ninon* (Graz: Leykam, 1952), p. 5. Originally published in the collection *Narrentanz*, 'Pastorale' was re-issued under the neutral title *Der Pavillon der Mamsell Ninon* in 1952. All subsequent quotations are from this later more accessible edition and are henceforth cited in text as P with page numbers.

mountains, the observer is less aware of the change because he is still influenced by the Arcadian landscape through which he has passed shortly before:

Lautlos und scheinbar ohne Bewegung arbeitet sich das Wasser an den Felsen herunter, und nur die dunkelgrünen Polster der Alpenrose mit ihren leuchtend-roten Blütenbüscheln bringen Leben in das starre, tote Bild. Aber wenn man noch vor kurzem wogende Getreidefelder und fruchtbeladene Bäume gesehen hat, dann nimmt man einen Schein von all dem Licht und Segen bei seinem Eintritt in das kühle, düstere Tal mit sich und fühlt nicht, wie trostlos und öde es eigentlich ist. (P, 6)

The narrator, however, occupies a privileged position and is able to recognize the deathliness of the virgin environment, conveying this metaphorically to the reader. The stasis of the rural space, often employed by conservative *Provinzkünstler* as a positive counter-image to set against bewildering and hectic urban life, is here re-invested with its pre-modern capacity to frighten and threaten the individual through a complex of images evoking mortality.<sup>225</sup> The ‘starres, totes Bild’ of the landscape in the above passage is soon joined by a sinister portrayal of the forest and the towering rock faces: ‘Schwarzer, trauriger Nadelwald krönt die Felsenmauern, und sie starren einen an wie die glasigen Augen eines Toten, dem keine Freundeshand die Lider geschlossen hat’ (P, 6).

Yet it is not only this depiction of the natural world that resists and subverts the clichés of *Heimat* literature in the opening chapter of ‘Pastorale’. The narrator’s description of the peasants who inhabit this isolated region also sets the text apart from

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<sup>225</sup> In *Jakob der Letzte* the lonely ravine above Altenmoos, called ‘Im Gottesfrieden’, is an example of such an empty rural space, untouched by the evils of urban modernity. Since Jakob later commits suicide and is buried here, it also tentatively takes on the deathly qualities evoked by Nabl’s narrator from the outset, thereby indicating Rosegger’s literary-historical position as a *Heimat* writer located between trivial *Provinzkunst* and Nabl’s more critical accounts of provincial life. See RW IV, pp. 21-22 and p. 221.

the frequently effusive praise of the native farmer common to the *Heimatroman*, and observed first-hand in the preceding analysis of Rosegger's *Jakob der Letzte*. Unlike later Austrian novels of rural life in the mode of Knut Hamsun's Nobel prize-winning *Markens Grøde* (*Growth of the Soil*, 1917), such as Karl Heinrich Waggerl's debut *Brot* (1930), where the Alpine environment is colonized by an indefatigable, vitalistic protagonist and eventually turned into a kind of hard-won garden of Eden, the mountain folk in 'Pastorale' eke out a difficult existence in abject poverty.<sup>226</sup> Their makeshift huts are erected in every feasible gap in the rocks, and every strip of land no matter how infertile is used for subsistence farming (P, 6). The majority of these peasants are woodcutters ('Holzknechte') who work long hours away from their families in the isolated woods high up in the hills, returning only on Saturday evening often to drink away their wages and worries in the valley's inns:

Die Besitzer dieser armseligen Liegenschaften sind Holzknechte. Die ganze Woche verbringen sie hoch oben im Gebirge in einer Blockhütte, dort, wo eben Bäume geschlagen werden, und nur Samstag am Abend, wenn sie ihren Wochenlohn erhalten haben, steigen sie ins Tal und dürfen Menschen sein nach ihrem Willen. Menschen daheim, bei ihrem abgearbeiteten, frühgealterteten Weib, bei ihren blassen, immer hungernden Kindern, Menschen in dem Stundenweit entfernten Marktflecken, bei saurem Wein oder auf der Kegelstatt. Sonntag, am Abend, steigen sie wieder hinauf ins Gebirge und vollbringen ihr Wochenwerk in ununterbrochener Eintönigkeit. (P, 7)

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<sup>226</sup> Waggerl's *Brot*, especially early on in the text, reads almost like a paraphrase of Hamsun's novel. Compare, for example, Waggerl, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5 vols (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1961), V: *Brot*, p. 6: 'Ein Mann tritt unten aus dem Walde, ein Mensch, der plötzlich da war und Hand anlegte.' with the opening line of a German translation of Hamsun's *Markens Grøde*. e.g. Hamsun, *Segen der Erde*, trans by J. Sandmeier and S. Angermann (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), p. 5: 'Der lange, lange Pfad über das Moor in den Wald hinein – Wer hat ihn ausgetreten? Der Mann, der Mensch, der erste, der hier war!'

The naturalistic description here clearly diverges from Rosegger's idealizing treatment of Jakob Steinreuter. Nabl's Alpine woodcutters are little more than slaves, dehumanized by the toil of their occupation which removes them from human society for most of the week. Their only reward is one day spent among their destitute families consisting of wives old before their time and unhealthy, starving children. If we recall that the narrative here is still addressed to a fictional city-dweller, it becomes clear that the story, even at this early stage, sets out to question and even reverse the stereotypes of the pastoral, showing that these bear little relation to the realities of rural life.

Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to interpret 'Pastorale' as a socially engaged portrayal of working-class life in the countryside. The main representative of the peasant class in the story, 'der alte Schliffinger', is a character half-way between the bleak realism of Naturalist fiction and the country clown of the bucolic tradition.<sup>227</sup> His alcoholism which eventually results in insanity is a motif with obvious roots in German Naturalism. Yet Nabl's portrayal of its consequences is less dire, for example, than in the terrible conclusion of Holz and Schlaf's *Papa Hamlet* (1889), where the drunken protagonist Nils Thienweibel rapes his wife and suffocates his baby child. Old Schliffinger may end the text in an asylum after a fit of rage in the local inn where he smashes numerous glasses, and gives vent to an offensive (yet ultimately true) critique of Schanda's relationship with his daughter, but his greed, shamelessness and willingness to essentially prostitute Anna to fund his drinking means that the reader has little sympathy for him. This situation is compounded by Nabl's employment of a narrative voice whose

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<sup>227</sup> On the bucolic clown see Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 17.

implicit values share more common ground with the landed gentleman Schanda than with the rural worker. Unlike Rosegger who purports (somewhat tenuously) to portray his own class from within, the narrator of Nabl's text is distanced from the events of the story, yet evidently speaks to his own class, when instructing the reader to leave Vienna from the Westbahnhof at the outset. This is borne out by the distanced, humorous depiction of old Schliffinger's ridiculous bar-room tricks with which he finances his addiction. Drinking a pint of rum in one go, swallowing broken glass, and passing a needle and thread through the folds of his skin – these party pieces illustrate how low Schliffinger has sunk. They provide a point of contrast to Nabl's positive depiction of his daughter Anna, but also make him a caricature incapable of being taken seriously.

If the comic treatment of old Schliffinger makes a concession to the classical pastoral tradition, then the love affair between the gentleman Max von Schanda and the peasant girl Anna Schliffinger reproduces one of its commonest plot elements.<sup>228</sup> However, Nabl's appropriation of this motif is central to his deconstruction of the Arcadian myth in the text. Firstly, Anna is defined not by her ties to the rural community, but rather by her outsider position. Like Barbro in Hamsun's later novel *Markens Grøde*, she has recently returned from a stint in the city. Yet in contrast to Hamsun, Nabl is not hostile towards urban life, and thus, rather than being influenced negatively, Anna has profited from her stay there. Removed from the damaging environment of her family home, the alcoholism which afflicts her father and killed her mother has had no lasting

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<sup>228</sup> In book six of Edmund Spenser's Elizabethan epic *The Faerie Queene* (1590/1596), for example, the knight Calidore woos the shepherd girl Pastorella. See Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev edn, ed. by A.C. Hamilton (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), VI, ix-x, pp. 660-675 and Gifford, pp. 28-29.

hereditary effects. Thus, in a reversal of the expectations arising from the conservative contemporary discourse of decadence, Anna's life in the city has enabled her to develop into an unrecognizably proud, physically mature, and attractive young woman: 'Herr von Schanda mußte sich alle Mühe geben, in diesem gesunden, kräftigen Mädchen die kleine Anna wiederzuerkennen' (P, 18).

Impressed by these attributes, Schanda soon manages to seduce Anna in the abandoned pavilion in his estate park, telling her the romantic story of Mme Ninon and Count Imre.<sup>229</sup> This tragic love story functions as a central point of contrast with Schanda and Anna's affair, aimed at highlighting the gap between nostalgia for an Arcadian aristocratic past and the mundane realities of modern-day sexual relationships. Anna's susceptibility for the kitschy myth of Ninon and Imre's everlasting love is indicated by her immediate response to hearing it: she sleeps with Max directly afterwards. Yet the prosaic Max is also swayed by the experience of romantic contentment and philosophizes about the value of class distinctions in the subsequent chapter.

However, the narrative technique employed in this section places Schanda's sincerity in an ironical light. For example, directly following a long section of narrated monologue where Schanda's sexual attraction to Anna prompts him to re-think his approach to society, subordinating the value of class beneath the universal value of pride, the narrator explicitly distances himself from Schanda, assuming a position external to the protagonist's consciousness and noting:

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<sup>229</sup> The name Ninon recalls the famous Parisian courtesan and erotic writer Ninon de l'Enclos (1620-1705).

Er hatte eine Pforte aufgerissen und sah ein ungeheuer weites Gebiet vor sich liegen. Neues, Gewaltiges. Umsturz und Revolution. [...] Aber er saß so bequem in seinem breiten Lehnstuhl und blies den Rauch seiner Zigarre so behaglich durch die Nase, daß ihm der kühne Gedanke allein vollständig genügte. (P, 64)

The reader is thus invited to adopt a sceptical view of Schanda's armchair philosophizing, which proves more than justified when a deeper consideration of the practical inconvenience of marrying a lower-class girl convinces him of the superficiality of his attachment to Anna. This rejection of romance in favour of rationality is prefigured structurally by the contrast between the inherited antiques which fill the majority of the rooms in Schanda's stately home and the practical modernity of the only room which Max himself has furnished:

Nur Max von Schanda hatte einen einzigen Raum im Hause umgestaltet. Er hatte das Herrenzimmer geschaffen, mit seinen schweren, englischen Ledermöbeln und all den Kleinigkeiten, die das Leben bequem machen, denn was den Junkern von Anno dazumal getaugt hatte, das konnte ein lustiger, vornehmer Mann von heutzutage nicht mehr brauchen. Trat man aus den anderen Gemächern in dieses Zimmer, dann war es wie ein Erwachen, wie eine Rückkehr zum Heute, und wer kein Freund von Träumen und müßigen Gedanken war, der atmete erleichtert auf. (P, 58-59)

Neither the family heirlooms, nor the legend of Imre's undying devotion to Ninon is compatible with the life of the modern gentleman, Nabl suggests. However, in the same vein, the concluding chapter of the story reveals that an independent modern woman has no need for the outdated romantic clichés of a bygone era. Passing the pavilion, her affair with Schanda now over, Anna contemplates both Ninon's suicide, and 'die Krehlinger

Marie', a modern-day Ninon who drowned herself in the river after being jilted, and reaches the conclusion that there is in fact no need to die:

Mußte man jetzt ins Wasser gehen oder sonst eine Dummheit machen? – Hatte er ihr das Gesicht zerstört? – Den Körper verkrüppelt? – Konnte ihr irgend jemand etwas ansehen? – Dumme Mamsell Ninon! – Wozu denn sterben? Es gab ja noch so viel anderes auf der Welt außer der Liebe, woran man seine Freude haben konnte. Mußte denn gleich gestorben sein? – [...] Dumme Mamsell Ninon! – Es mußte langweilig sein, in einem Bergpark ganz mutterseelenallein begraben zu liegen. – Am nächsten Tage bat sie Herrn von Schanda um ihre Entlassung. Sie wollte doch wieder in die Stadt zurückkehren. (P, 78-79)

This Schnitzlerian passage provides a suitably subversive, modern ending to the text, which explicitly rejects the implicit demand for the death or suicide of the abandoned and/or fallen woman so common to nineteenth-century realist narrative.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, with Anna's return to the city posited as the preferable alternative, Nabl turns the traditional pastoral mode evoked in the story's title on its head.

### **'Ich will nur zurück aufs Land': The Image of the Rural Community in Nabl's *Ödhof***

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<sup>230</sup> Prominent examples include Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (1856/57), Theodor Storm, *Auf der Universität* (1863), Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (1877), Theodor Fontane, *Cécile* (1887) and *Effi Briest* (1895) and Saar, *Geschichte eines Wiener Kindes* (1892).

Like ‘Pastorale’, Nabl’s *Ödhof* is a work whose title might lead an uninitiated reader to expect a *Heimat* novel, only to be disappointed on later reading the text.<sup>231</sup> For despite implausible attempts by some of the novel’s early reviewers to associate the novel with *Provinzkunst*, a closer examination of *Ödhof* reveals that it shares neither the ideological convictions, nor the tendency towards idealization of the rural community routinely associated with the *Heimat* genre.<sup>232</sup> It offers, instead, a much more differentiated and ambivalent treatment of country life than even more stimulating Austrian examples of the *Heimat* novel, such as Rosegger’s *Jakob der Letzte*.

This is not to say that *Ödhof* has absolutely nothing in common with *Heimat* literature. In fact, the novel thematizes and is even structured around the division between town and country, which, as we have seen, was a particularly central aspect of the turn-of-the-century discourse of *Heimat*. While most of the plot takes place at an Alpine estate purchased early in the novel by one of the main characters, Johannes Arlet, the text both begins and ends in Vienna.<sup>233</sup> It is here that Johannes Arlet first reveals his desire to leave the city and move to the countryside, telling his brother-in-law: ‘Ich habe die Stadt über! [...] Ich will nur zurück aufs Land’ (AW III, 43). By rejecting urban life in favour of the countryside, Arlet seemingly embraces the sentiments of the *Heimat* ideologues traced

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<sup>231</sup> Some later scholars have also fallen into this trap. Peter Zimmermann, for example, misleadingly lists Nabl’s novel in a statistical survey of 299 ‘Bauernromane’, 56 of which contain the word ‘Hof’ in their titles. See Zimmermann, pp. 198-225 and Rossbacher, “‘Ödhof’ in den ersten Rezensionen”, p. 118.

<sup>232</sup> For example, W. von Wymetal asserts in his review of the novel that Nabl belatedly fulfils Hermann Bahr’s dream of Austrian *Provinzkunst*: ‘Was Bahr damals auf künstlichem Wege und über Nacht nicht hervorzaubern konnte, ist seither langsam und ganz ohne fremdes Zutun erstanden: eine österreichische *Heimatkunst*, in der Schönherr die Tiroler, Bartsch die Steirer und Nabl die niederösterreichische Note anschlägt.’ See W. von Wymetal, ‘Franz Nabl: “Ödhof”’, *Wiener Mode* (15 March 1912). For a detailed discussion of *Ödhof*’s early reception see Chapter 2 above.

<sup>233</sup> For more on the novel’s structure, and for an extended analysis of the text as a whole refer to Chapter 2 above.

earlier in this chapter, and bears comparison with a whole host of characters in early twentieth-century *Heimat* works, such as Rosegger's complementary novels *Erdsegen* and *Weltgift* (1901), Hamsun's *Markens Grøde* and Waggener's *Brot*.<sup>234</sup> However, in stark contrast to the protagonists of works in the *Heimat* mode, Arlet has no interest in farm work or in the cultivation of the land so frequently idealized in the contemporary discourse of *Heimat*, and reinforced, though not always as one-sidedly, by the plots of these literary texts.<sup>235</sup> He wants, instead, to purchase a wooded estate where he can roam freely and independently, viewing arable farmers as overly reliant on the whims of fate:

Sie können nichts anderes machen, als den Boden umgraben und den Samen auswerfen. Dann müssen sie die Hände in den Schoß legen und alles andere dem lieben Gott überlassen! ... Und der liebe Gott macht, was er will. Er läßt es manchmal sechs Wochen lang regnen, bis Ihnen der letzte Rest verfault ist – und manchmal läßt er sechs Wochen lang die Sonne scheinen, bis Ihnen alles zu Staub und Pulver verbrennt! [...] Wald soll es sein! Alte, schwere Bäume, die keinen Regen mehr brauchen ... und keine Sonne! Monatlang muß kein Tropfen fallen, und Sie können lachen. Es kann aber auch den halben Himmel herunterschwemmen, und Sie können noch immer lachen! ... Man ist nämlich – sozusagen unabhängig vom lieben Gott. Und das ist ein sehr angenehmes Gefühl! (AW III, 44)

This reads almost as a reversal of Rosegger's rhetoric in *Jakob der Letzte*, which celebrates the maternal quasi-religious relationship between the peasant and the earth ('Scholle') and criticizes the spread of forestation in the Alps because of its damaging impact on smallholding farmers.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> On *Erdsegen* see footnote 199 above.

<sup>235</sup> While *Erdsegen*, for example, is unambiguous about the advantages of country life, the work of the Alpine farmer is also shown to be full of hardship in the course of the text.

<sup>236</sup> See RW IV, p. 170.

Furthermore, for a work set largely in the countryside, it is especially striking that the farming class, so often celebrated in *Heimat* discourse as the backbone of Germanic culture, is scarcely present in *Ödhof*. The representatives of the rural community in the novel are, instead, mainly members of the upper social echelons of the small market town Gramatitz. They include, for example, the mayor, Zlawadil, the owner of the most important local shop, Schloissenheber, and the influential innkeeper, Parawandel, whose relatives own a hotel in Vienna and even speak ‘Hochdeutsch’ (AW III, 94). These local dignitaries, the so-called ‘Bürger van Urt’ (AW III, 113), are portrayed from a distanced and frequently critical perspective which reveals them to be naive, inherently distrustful of outsiders, self-serving and often plainly ridiculous.<sup>237</sup>

One of the key narrative strategies employed by Nabl for this purpose is humour. For instance, in the first episode depicting Arlet’s interaction with the locals, Arlet rejects publically the plan hatched by the timber merchant, Zorner, to trick him, as a supposedly uninformed city dweller, into selling off the logging rights on his estate below their real value. The angry Zorner’s response is to pull down his breeches and show Arlet his backside:

Die Wut kochte immer höher in ihm auf, sie drängte aus ihm, wollte sich befreien. – Und da vollbrachte der Urban Zorner seine große Tat. Jene Tat, die ihn im weitesten Umkreis berühmt machen sollte. Er stand auf und trat zwei Schritte vom Tisch weg. Und wie er so dastand, den Rücken der Gesellschaft zugekehrt, löste er, bevor noch ein Mensch ahnen konnte, was er eigentlich vorhatte, sein Beinkleid, und im nächsten Augenblick bot sich den Augen aller sein entblößte Kehrseite dar. Und dazu sprach er ganz ruhig und gelassen: “Habt’s mi gern!” (AW III, 119)

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<sup>237</sup> See Keiper, p. 72.

The careful balance in this passage between the formal tone and syntax of the narrator's description and the coarse reality of Zorner's behaviour produces a comic effect which recalls the humorous representation of the village drunk old Schliffinger in 'Pastorale'. The exasperated Zorner's so-called 'große Tat' clearly echoes the age-old motif of the bucolic yokel, rather than reproducing the stereotype of the sturdy peasant preferred in the contemporary *Heimatroman* and exemplified by Rosegger's Jakob Steinreuter.<sup>238</sup>

Another prime illustration of this lighthearted narrative strategy of poking fun at the provincials' crudity can be found in the episode where Arlet stands them a barrel of strong Bavarian beer in a wager with Parawandel that it will be emptied in the space of a single evening. Although many of the regulars refrain from drinking the free alcohol, taking Arlet's gesture as a presumptuous slur on their own local brew, one of them, Kroschek, cannot resist the opportunity. Previously defensive about his Czech heritage, once drunk he tells everyone his life story, boasting about his ancestry and making vague allusions about the future of the German fatherland, before being sick on the floor of the inn. Once again, the narration is distanced, ironic and essentially derisive:

Seine [Kroscheks] Zunge mußte sich erst an den fremden Biergeschmack gewöhnen. Aber dann kam das große Behagen. Eine fröhliche, wunderbare Wärme strömte ihm durch den ganzen Körper bis hinauf in seinen großen, vierkantigen Schädel, und sein zusammengestarrtes Gehirn begann allmählich aufzutauen wie ein alter Eisklumpen im Schein der Frühjahrssonne. Mancherlei Gedanken sproßten daraus hervor, und mit erstaunlicher Schnelligkeit war er auch imstande, die Gedanken in Worte zu verwandeln. [...] Etwas später wurde der Kroschek mit einem Male ganz ernst. Von seiner eigenen Vergangenheit kam er auf die seines Geschlechtes zu sprechen. Er berichtete von hohen Ehren, die seine Vorfahren dereinst in ihrer böhmischen Heimat genossen hätten. Und

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<sup>238</sup> See also Gifford, p. 17 and Keiper, p. 72.

siehe, endlich war er so weit, daß er auf seine Abstammung stolz zu sein erklärte und sich in verschwommene, andeutende Prophezeiungen über die Zukunft seines weiteren deutschen Vaterlandes erging. [...] Nach dem zwölften Glas verrstummte seine Rede. Steif und schwer lagen seine beiden Arme mit den krampfhaft geballten Fäusten auf dem Tisch. Sein Antlitz glühte in braunroter Farbe, und sein Blick starrte aus weit hervorquellenden, gelblichen Augäpfeln blöd ins Leere. Einmal noch setzte er das Glas an den Mund, dann geriet sein ganzer, massiger Oberkörper in seltsam aufzuckende, schluckende Bewegungen. “Hiatzt reekt’s eam!” rief irgendein Sachverständiger. (AW III, 237-238)

The description here of how alcohol influences Kroschek’s limited mental faculties first playfully assumes the perspective of the drinker himself, sharing his surprise at the astonishing (and likely imagined) speed at which his thoughts can be verbalized, before then drawing away from its object to provide a detached, even alienated perspective on his drunkenness. The humorous effect of this is heightened at the close of the passage by the narrator’s choice of formal register (‘Sachverständiger’) to describe a fellow drinker who announces in dialect Kroschek’s need to vomit.

Other aspects of Nabl’s portrayal of the rural community in *Ödhof* are, however, much more sinister. This applies especially to the treatment of the anti-Semitism exhibited by the inhabitants of Gramatitz.<sup>239</sup> Early in the novel, when the townsfolk gather at Parawandel’s inn in anticipation of Arlet’s arrival, Kroschek expresses their shared fear of being infiltrated by Jews: ‘Und won a oa Jud is?’ (AW III, 106). Here, Nabl’s narrative voice once again separates itself from the views of the provincials,

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<sup>239</sup> Nabl’s critical treatment of anti-Semitism in *Ödhof* is also noted by Handke, ‘Franz Nabl’s Größe und Kleinlichkeit’, pp. 34-35.

placing them in a critical, even ridiculous light. This occurs, on the one hand, through objective description:

Ein Jude war für diese Menschen noch immer der Inbegriff alles Schmutzigen und Verwerflichen. Er galt ihnen noch als ehrlos, ja überhaupt nicht als voller Mensch. Und wenn ein-, zweimal im Jahre der Häuteljud Simon Perlis durchkam, ein armer Kerl, der die Häute der geschlachteten Tiere oder die Felle des geschossenen Raubzeugs zusammenkaufte, so hielt sich ein jeder von vornherein für den Betrogenen. War aber das Geschäft einmal gemacht, dann konnte der Jude schau'n, daß er weiterkam. Dann wollte keiner mehr etwas mit ihm zu schaffen haben. Die Kinder auf der Straße höhnten ihm nach, bewarfen ihn mit Schmutz und Unrat, und die Alten standen in den Türen und lachten dazu. (AW III, 106-107)

By inserting adverbs, such as 'noch' and 'noch immer', and modal particles 'Er galt ihnen [...] ja überhaupt nicht als voller Mensch', Nabl indicates that his narrator does not share the opinions of the locals. On the other hand, by then proceeding to reproduce the superstitious prejudices of their collective consciousness in free indirect speech, as the dialect contraction 'schau'n' in the above passage anticipates, Nabl further exposes the narrow-mindedness of the townsfolk:

Denn so wie sie vor ein paar Augenblicken noch überzeugt gewesen waren, der neue Schloßherr könne nur ein Christ sein, so galt es ihnen jetzt für ausgemacht, er müsse unbedingt ein Jude sein. Und das war schrecklich. Einfach weil sie nichts dagegen machen konnten. Gar nichts. Er hatte sich hier festgesetzt und war nicht mehr von hier wegzubekommen. Er hatte ja jedenfalls ein genauso dickes Fell wie der Häuteljud. [...] Er besaß ja viel Geld und war nicht auf sie angewiesen. Vielleicht würde er noch andere Juden in die Gegend hereinziehen, immer mehr und mehr! ... Und ganz heimlich, im tiefsten Grunde ihrer Seelen, regte sich das Märchen von schauerlichen jüdischen Opferfesten und Ritualmorden. (AW III, 107-108)

Since, as it transpires, Arlet is not a Jew, the theme of anti-Semitism scarcely figures in the rest of the plot. A notable exception to this, however, is the episode where Simon Perlis, the so-called 'Häuteljud', makes the arduous hike out to the Ödhof in the middle of winter with the intention of buying a number of pine marten skins from Arlet. Even though they fail to settle on a price, Arlet gives Perlis a fox skin in compensation for his troubles and invites him to have a warm drink before leaving the estate. Arlet's humane treatment of the Jew Perlis thus contrasts starkly with his mistreatment by the folk of Gramatitz, and indicates that the estate-owner, though an unbearable domestic tyrant, also has positive qualities.

This practice of contrasting Arlet's free-thinking, liberal-minded attitude with the locals' insularity and prejudice also applies to the treatment of other outsider figures in the novel.<sup>240</sup> For example, when Viertaler, a skilled carpenter originally from another valley, decides to marry a girl from his home village rather than the daughter of the influential shopkeeper Schloissenheber, he is gradually alienated from the local community. Even though his only rival, Deiflinger, is an incompetent drunk, the townsfolk see Viertaler as a threatening outsider who unfairly steals the native's custom. As a result, and in order to prevent him from reaching the statutory residence requirements needed for full citizenship of Gramatitz, Viertaler's landlord terminates the lease on his house and workshop and he is unable to find another property to rent in town. The Ödhof, though, also belongs to the communal area and when Arlet discovers how

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<sup>240</sup> On the sociological significance of the treatment of outsiders by the rural community in the novel see Keiper, p. 71.

Viertaler has been treated by the townsfolk, he invites him to move to his estate, thereby enabling the carpenter to acquire the right to permanent residence in spite of the locals' machinations.

Another instance of this is Arlet's compassionate support of the alcoholic fisherman, Schinkl. From a middle-class background, Schinkl speaks 'Hochdeutsch' and has a university education but has decided to turn his back on polite society in a desperate attempt to retain his freedom, or as he puts it his eternal youth: 'Ich bin ... die ewige Jugend ...' (AW III, 251). In this sense, he shares Arlet's steadfast, and ultimately futile, belief in the possibility of living life only in the present.<sup>241</sup> These outlandish views and especially his non-conformist lifestyle make it impossible for Schinkl to be anything other than barely tolerated by the conservative townsfolk. Thus, when he is found lying comatose in a freezing stream one morning after a night of excessive drinking, Schinkl is taken back to the dirty hovel where he lives and is essentially left to die. He is rescued only when Arlet hears of his misfortune and, appalled by his squalid living quarters, takes him back to the Ödhof to convalesce.<sup>242</sup> Schinkl's alcohol-ravaged body is unable to recover and he dies shortly afterwards. As an affront to the townsfolk who ignored his plight, Arlet arranges for Schinkl to be buried in the town graveyard and erects an expensive granite tombstone with a gold-plated trellis in his honour.

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<sup>241</sup> See AW III, pp. 208-209.

<sup>242</sup> See AW III, p. 403: 'Die Luft war eine so furchtbare Mischung von Moder und menschlicher Ausdünstung, daß er [Arlet] im ersten Augenblick glaubte, erbrechen zu müssen.'

Arlet, of course, is also an outsider, who is never fully accepted by the citizens of Gramatitz.<sup>243</sup> Yet it is precisely for this reason that his actions in support of other marginalized figures, such Schinkl, Viertaler or Simon Perlis provide an effective counterbalance to the prejudices of the townsfolk, prompting the reader to adopt a detached view of their insularity, rather than idealizing the values of the rural community as so often occurred in the contemporary *Heimatroman*. This technique is, in fact, almost the exact opposite of the rhetorical strategies employed in many of these works, where outsiders are negatively depicted as threatening foreigners, such as the Polish forestry official in Rosegger's *Jakob der Letzte*, or even worse anti-Semitic caricatures, such as the red-haired, hook-nosed money-lender Sam Harrassowitz in Polenz's *Der Büttnerbauer*.<sup>244</sup>

Another important point of contrast between *Ödhof* and the conventions of the *Heimat* genre is the depiction of the impact of modernization on the countryside. While *Heimat* novels either tended to ignore the social transformations occurring around the turn of the century, or as Rosegger's *Jakob der Letzte* exemplifies, to polemicize against them, Nabl's portrayal of the coming of modernity in *Ödhof* is dispassionate and neutral. This is neatly illustrated by Chapter 70 of the novel, which was inspired, as Nabl explicitly stated, by Mann's literary technique in the penultimate chapter of

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<sup>243</sup> See esp., AW III, pp. 296-300.

<sup>244</sup> See PBB, p. 235. On the stereotype depiction of social outsiders in the *Heimatroman* see also Rossbacher, *Heimatkunstabewegung*, pp. 188-190.

*Buddenbrooks*.<sup>245</sup> On comparing both passages, the structural similarities are clear. Nabl, like Mann, begins with a generalized, objective statement: ‘Die neue Zeit schafft sich folgendermaßen Eingang in ein stilles, weltabgeschiedenes Tal’ (AW III, 453), which is then repeated shortly afterwards, rhetorically framing the description it announces.<sup>246</sup> There are, however, subtle differences in the narrative perspective employed in both texts. Mann’s narrator adopts a thoroughly detached position using scientific vocabulary (‘Ein tüchtiger Arzt [...] wird, was die Arzneien betrifft, sich einer Mischung von Jod und Jodkalium bedienen, Chinin und Antipyrin verschreiben...’, MFA I.I, 830) and expert knowledge (‘Die Temperatur des Körpers erreicht einundvierzig Grad...’, MFA I.I, 829) to evoke the course of a typhus infection. Nabl’s narrator, on the other hand, relies more on the technique of alienation, ironically reducing his perspective on the developments to the limited perspective of the rural observer, who does not understand what is going on:

Im Anfang tauchen nur kleine Gruppen von Männern auf, die man in dieser Gegend noch nicht gesehen hat. Die einen sind etwas besser gekleidet, tragen hohe Stiefel oder Wadenstrümpfe, [...] die anderen gehen im Arbeitskleid und schleppen Teile von Instrumenten, weiß-rot gestreifte Meßstangen und grobleinene Schirme mit sich herum. Schirme, wie sie die Marktweiber haben, um ihre Ware vor Regen und Sonnenschein zu schützen. (AW III, 453)<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> See Scharf, ‘Gespräch mit Franz Nabl’ and Himmel, p. 1205. Most scholars who mention this quote Himmel who does not identify a source. See, for example, Keiper, p. 75 and 81. Nabl also discusses this ‘knappe Verneigung vor dem bewunderten großen Erzähler’ in an unpublished letter to Reinhard Urbach, 21 January 1971. See typescript in NN/FNI, Korrespondenz, IV/32.

<sup>246</sup> Mann’s text repeats the phrase: ‘Mit dem Typhus ist es folgendermaßen bestellt.’ See MFA I.I, p. 828 and 831. In Nabl’s text the opening statement is slightly altered, but still clearly echoed: ‘So hält die neue Zeit ihren Einzug in ein stilles, weltabgeschiedenes Tal.’, AW III, p. 457.

<sup>247</sup> Keiper identifies this narrative technique, following Fredric Jameson, as defamiliarization, which he translates as ‘sozialkritische Verfremdung’. See Keiper, p. 75 and Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language. A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 56-57.

The narrator, like a villager, is unable to recognize what the meaning of these actions is: he sees only parts of instruments, and can only relate them to his parochial range of experience, comparing the umbrellas to those seen at a provincial market. The reader, of course, is capable of interpreting the data in light of his own (urban) experience and can, thus, take pleasure in his superior understanding, while simultaneously experiencing the threatening nature of such unexplained developments for the country dweller.<sup>248</sup> In the following pages, the narrator proceeds to trace the coming of all the trappings of modernity to this hypothetical Alpine valley. The reader learns about the arrival of the railway, the development of tourism, demographic growth, even the advent of electricity and discovers how, on completion of a new train line, this generalized pattern of progress eventually happens in Gramatitz. In contrast to *Heimat* novels, such as *Jakob der Letzte*, though, the detached narrative strategy employed here does not present these processes as regrettable examples of the evils of modern life. Instead, modernization is merely recorded unpolemically, in a manner recalling the best fiction of the Austrian realist Ferdinand von Saar, as both inevitable and unstoppable.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Keiper, pp. 75-76.

<sup>249</sup> For a prime example of Saar's nuanced treatment of rural life in the midst of modernization see the late novella *Doktor Trojan* (1901).

### **The Fragility of the Rural Idyll: Nabl's *Der Tag der Erkenntnis***

While *Ödhof* clearly distances itself from the *Heimat* mode through its critical portrayal of the rural community and, to a lesser extent, through its balanced, objective treatment of socio-historical change in the countryside, Nabl's next substantial work, *Der Tag der Erkenntnis*, has even less in common with the *Heimat* genre. Although the novella is set in the provinces, it focuses on a personal crisis in the life of the country doctor, Anton Schiermayer, drawing on the stereotypical idealization of parochial harmony common to trivial examples of the *Heimat* mode, only to radically expose it. At the start of the text, the reader learns how the protagonist, Schiermayer, moves, like Johannes Arlet, from the city to a small provincial market town in Lower Austria. Initially confronted with the ingrained mistrust of the local farmers, the peaceable Schiermayer gradually wins the respect of the local barber-surgeon Reithofer and, especially following his successful introduction of modern serum therapy during an epidemic, establishes himself as a pillar of the local community.

This opening sketch of the doctor's background is followed by a more detailed description of his way of life in the second chapter, which opens:

Das Leben des Doktor Schiermayer und das Heim, in dem dieses Leben sich abspielte, glichen durchaus einer jener Idyllen, die das Hirn eines lebenssatten Städters und Gesellschaftsmenschen sich in müßigen Stunden als Ziel einer scheinbar ganz ehrlich empfundenen Sehnsucht auszumalen liebt. (AW I, 130)

This explicit recognition of the tendency to idealize provincial life as a positive counter-image to modern urban life is important, since it indicates the narrator's awareness of the constructed nature of the image of rural life in popular contemporary discourse, arousing suspicions that Schiermayer's idyllic existence may only appear so when viewed externally. The externality of the reader's view of Schiermayer is maintained in this chapter, outlining the beauty of his garden, and above all his passion for breeding and keeping chickens. While the reader discovers that he fearfully locks up his chickens overnight, something the villagers find unusual, it is not revealed what truth there is in the rumours that he and his wife decorate the chickens with frills and ribbons for their amusement during the winter months: 'Was von all diesen Dingen das Dienstmädchen der Doktorsleute wirklich gesehen hatte und was es hinzuerfand oder was der Arzt seinen Bekannten hie und da erzählte, das ließ sich freilich nicht genau feststellen' (AW I, 133). This characteristically modern narrative stance, which only reproduces what is generally known about Schiermayer, emphasizes the subjectivity and limitations of our views of other people. Thus it is intimated that the final line of the chapter, which represents the general view of the Schiermayers' happiness, is an opinion open to revision: 'Ja unser Doktor und seine Frau, das sind halt zwei glückliche Menschen!' (AW I, 133).

At the beginning of the third chapter, Nabl once more evokes a static image of rural life:

Durch die regungslos glühende Luft zitterte der harzige Geruch der Alpenrosen, die jetzt neben dem Edelweiß den einzigen Schmuck der beiden Alpengärten bildeten, und der süße Duft der voll erblühten Rosenbäumchen. Der letzte Ton der Mittagsglocke, die schon um elf Uhr geläutet wurde, war verklungen, und mit der Sonne schien auch die

Stille immer höher und höher zu steigen und jeden Laut in ihrer glimmernden Flut zu ersticken. (AW I, 133)

This passage is characteristic of Nabl's predilection for creating motionless spaces, seemingly untouched by the passage of time. Here the stillness of the summer day almost suppresses the sound of the church bell, yet, as the verb 'schien' indicates, this static idyll cannot prevail untouched by the outside world. Indeed, Schiermayer's newspaper contains an article describing the success of one of Schiermayer's school friends, who has been appointed head of an important city clinic. This article proves a turning-point in both Schiermayer's life and in the plot of the story, penetrating the isolated existence he has created for himself, and eventually vindicating Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler's assertion: 'Wenn Nabl nun Bilder der Dauer evoziert, seine Figuren in geschlossene Räume sperrt oder sie die Einsamkeit suchen läßt [...], so ist dies nie das Idyll, das mit der Signatur von Jean Paul "Vollglück in der Beschränkung" versehen werden kann.'<sup>250</sup>

In this third chapter, the doctor is visited by his closest friend, the village teacher Gärtner. Gärtner persuades him to talk to his son Rudolf, whose life Schiermayer had saved from the epidemic mentioned in the first chapter. Gärtner is worried that Rudolf, a talented musician, is on the brink of breaking off his legal studies, designed above all to create connections for him in the city for the furtherance of his musical career. Instead, having fallen in love with a young local girl, Rudolf has decided to marry in the hope of leading a happy, even if intellectually and artistically unfulfilled life in the country. Telling Gärtner mysteriously about the appointment of his old school colleague to a post

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<sup>250</sup> Schmidt-Dengler, 'Franz Nabl und die Literaturgeschichte', pp. 9-27 (p. 20).

as head of the university clinic, Schiermayer asks whether he is really a suitable candidate for persuading Rudolf of the perils of his plan, playing on his own reputation as a paragon of provincial contentment: “Aber findest du es nicht ein bißchen komisch, daß gerade ich in dieser Angelegenheit mit deinem Sohn sprechen soll? [...] Ich mit meiner sprichwörtlichen Zufriedenheit. Ich bin ja der glückliche Doktor!” (AW I, 139-140). Gärtner overlooks the irony inherent in Schiermayer’s statement and injures his friend’s pride, telling him that Rudolf is different from both his father and Schiermayer: “Ein Mensch mit einer besonderen Veranlagung hat gewissermaßen höhere Verpflichtungen! [...] Der darf nicht so über sich verfügen wie der erste beste Durchschnittsmensch!” (AW I, 140). This confirms the public view of Schiermayer, separating him not only from Rudolf, but equally from his successful school colleague, and precipitates a personal crisis, unleashing internal doubts suppressed in the outward harmony of his everyday life. These feelings of inadequacy are intimated by Schiermayer’s unusual irritation and indifference at the end of the chapter, and surface violently in his discussion with Rudolf in the next section, undermining the external appearance of his idyllic rural existence.

The dialogue between Schiermayer and Rudolf hinges on the tension between personal happiness and its submission to a higher transcendental goal as the meaning of human existence. Rudolf recognizes his unique musical talent, yet questions the value of art to the individual compared to the humble pleasures of marriage and love, asking: ‘Ist denn nicht das Allerkleinste, das man sich für sein wirkliches Leben schafft, mehr wert als das Großartigste, das man sich und den andern am Ende doch nur vorspiegelt?’ (AW I, 149). At this point in the conversation Schiermayer loses control, recognizing the

dilemma faced by Rudolf as his own and exclaiming: ‘Wie das alles in mir aufwacht! Wie ich alles vor mir sehe! Wie in einem Spiegel!’ (AW I, 150). The reflection of the central conflict of Schiermayer’s life in Rudolf’s dilemma, compounded by the appointment of a less talented man to a position which could have been his under different circumstances, shakes the fundament of his ‘happy’ existence, revealing his life-long self-deception:

Vor keiner Seele heuchelt man so virtuos und ununterbrochen wie vor sich selbst! Und man heuchelt so lange, bis man nicht mehr weiß, daß man heuchelt! Man hält Licht für Schatten und Schwarz für Weiß [...] bis endlich einmal einen Augenblick kommt, nur eine Sekunde! — ein blöder Zufall oder ein Zeitungsblatt mit drei oder vier Zeilen Druckerschwärze — und der ganze Schwindel geht in Fetzen wie altes, verfaultes Papier! (AW I, 151-152)

The peaceful hobbies which contributed to the narrator’s evocation of his idyllic provincial existence in the second chapter, his well kept garden and seemingly harmless love of his chickens are equally part of Schiermayer’s unwitting self-deception. It is for this reason that the doctor forces Rudolf to inspect his chicken coops, exclaiming: ‘Sie sollen Einlaß finden in das Märchen meines Lebens!’ (AW I, 152). The spatial location of the chickens, locked up in his underground cellar every evening, provides a symbolic indication of their role in Schiermayer’s life. Rather than displaying his ‘besondere Zufriedenheit und bürgerliche Gesinnung’ (AW I, 133), they function cathartically as means of counteracting his feelings of impotence when confronted by the futility of human existence:

Sehen Sie, hier ist mein Königreich! Hier bändige ich diese wilden, reißenden Bestien! ... Alle, alle! ... Der Reihe nach! Kein Hahn und keine Henne, die mir nicht gehorchen, mich nicht als ihren Herrn anerkennen! ... Hier schaffe ich! Hier hab ich meinen großen, unbegrenzten Wirkungskreis! ... [...] Oh, ich sage Ihnen, es geht nichts über ein inhaltsreiches, schöpferisches Leben! (AW I, 153-154)

The bitter irony of this quotation is underlined as Schiermayer strikes out at one of his chickens, leading to its death, showing hidden aggressions which contradict the harmonious perception of his character evoked earlier in the text. Moreover, as a shocked Rudolf leaves Schiermayer, the doctor reaches down and uproots a flower in his rockery, exclaiming: ‘Auch so ein Stück barmherziger Hülle’ (AW I, 154). In turning on his beloved flowers and chickens, Schiermayer reveals the cracks in the outward harmony of his supposedly idyllic life. His pastimes are transmuted into omnipotent fantasies, replacing authentic happiness, thus recalling the comments of Johannes Arlet in Nabl’s earlier novel *Ödhof*:

Und die Bäume dieses Waldes müssen einem sein wie Untertanen, ja wie Leibeigene, deren Leben und Tod man beschließen kann nach freier Willkür. Man kann sie aufwachsen lassen in ungestörtem Frieden, aber wenn man einen großen Groll im Herzen hat, dann kann man die Axt einsenken mit schwerem Hieb in ihren Stamm. (AW II, 123)<sup>251</sup>

Nevertheless, Schiermayer’s aggression results from momentary realization of his inability to change the course of his life, and is more akin to the drunken revelations of the pensioned teacher Richard Meser in Nabl’s *Ödhof*, than Johannes Arlet. While Arlet draws his strength from his acceptance of the blind futility of human life, the sudden

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<sup>251</sup> See also Chapter 2 above.

recognition of his life's insignificance is potentially destructive to Schiermayer precisely because he has denied it for so long.<sup>252</sup>

Another important similarity between *Ödhof* and *Der Tag der Erkenntnis* is the motif of suicide employed in both texts. Arlet, it will be remembered, tyrannizes his weaker son, Heinz, vindictively forcing him to stay at the Ödhof in punishment for earlier sleeping with his father's mistress and allowing Heinz to marry his sweetheart only on the condition that she too moves to the estate. Unable to extricate himself from his father's dominance in life, Heinz escapes only by killing himself. In *Der Tag der Erkenntnis*, Schiermayer also plays a significant role in Rudolf's death, yet the circumstances here are less clear. Following their discussion, Schiermayer disappears into the hills, returning later that night with his personal demons apparently beaten, the only change in his behaviour being a marked lack of interest in his earlier pastimes. On the other hand, Rudolf breaks off his relationship with his sweetheart and begins to devote himself to his music for the first time in weeks. Nevertheless, he is found only days later drowned in the river, following a fishing expedition to the steep-banked local stream.

Although some doubt remains whether Rudolf's death should even be considered suicide, the poetic structure of the text, which posits Rudolf as Schiermayer's double, strongly favours this interpretation. Despite the doubts of the local priest, Gärtner blames Schiermayer for his son's death and the latter is convinced that Rudolf's drowning was voluntary: 'Sein Sohn hat sich umgebracht! [...] Ich glaube es nicht. Ich weiß es!' (AW I,

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<sup>252</sup> Cf. AW II, pp. 316-328.

160). Moreover, this judgement is strengthened by Schiermayer's wife, who comes to the same conclusion independently:

‘Toni ... Nicht wahr, er ist selbst ins Wasser gegangen?’ Schiermayer sah sie lange an. ‘Weißt du das auch, Johanna?’ ‘Ja’ Es kam aus ihr heraus wie ein Schrei [...] ‘Toni! ... Wie du am Abend damals von mir weg bist ... und hinaus in den Wald ... da hab ich geglaubt, daß sie dich auch so bringen werden! (AW I, 161)

Since Schiermayer and Johanna are the only characters who know about the doctor's self-revelatory outburst during his discussion with Rudolf, they have a privileged insight into Rudolf's potential motivation to commit suicide, hidden from the other characters in the text. Indeed, it appears likely that Schiermayer's chilling evocation of his unfulfilled life contributes decisively to Rudolf's death, by destroying his illusions that provincial domesticity could solve his existential problems. However, owing to the ambiguity of Nabl's narrative technique, the reader is denied absolute certainty about the cause of Rudolf's drowning, and is thus challenged to examine the events of the text in seeking an answer.

Indeed, even though the exact circumstances of Rudolf's death remain unclear, it is still significant that both Schiermayer and his wife regard it as a suicide. By viewing Rudolf's death as voluntary, Schiermayer projects his own crisis onto Rudolf, recognizing the close connection between their experiences. In doing so, he underlines the dubious moral implications of his actions in the previous chapter which undercut the apparent harmony of the text's conclusion. While the end of the story witnesses an emotional reunion between Schiermayer and Johanna which provides a reconciliatory

ending unusual in Nabl's earlier fiction, the reader cannot avoid the impression that this is bought at the cost of Rudolf's life. Schiermayer's process of rebirth, symbolized by his interpretation of the hole in the earth, where he had torn up a flower at the height of his emotional crisis as 'die Spuren einer Hand, die nach dem Baum der Erkenntnis gegriffen hat!' (AW I, 162), is only possible because of Rudolf's death. Since Schiermayer interprets this as suicide, he cannot possibly absolve himself of his share of responsibility for it.

Moreover, even without reference to the complex moral implications underlying the text's conclusion, Schiermayer's impassioned fit of rage and disgust earlier in the story serves to undermine the idealized portrayal of provincial life at the outset of the text. Indeed, when these elements are taken together, the story can be read as an indication of the problems of mistaking exterior appearances for reality, which played an important role in both the fantasies of the urban reading public and their literary expression in unsophisticated *Heimat* literature around the turn of the century and beyond. Furthermore, when considered alongside other works by Nabl, such as the story 'Pastorale', and his important novel *Ödhof*, the text goes a long way in contradicting the view of Nabl as an uncomplicated regional writer.

## **Conclusion**

The critical interpretations undertaken in this chapter demonstrate that Nabl's fictions of rural life consistently and repeatedly resist the simplified, idealized view of the

countryside as untouched by the problems of modernity, which influenced disparate strands of intellectual discourse in fin-de-siècle Europe and found literary expression in numerous trivial examples of *Heimat* literature. However, as my analysis of Peter Rosegger's *Jakob der Letzte* indicates, it is misleading to regard all *Heimat* novels as conforming to this stereotype. Although Rosegger's novel cannot compete with the differentiated, critical perspective on the provinces offered by Nabl's work, *Jakob der Letzte* stands out in its author's oeuvre as a serious attempt to engage with the historical problems of rural decline. While Rosegger never fully relinquishes his polemical commitment to the conservative rhetoric of *Heimatkunst*, his text demonstrates, especially through its use of the suicide motif, that the *Heimatroman* genre has more to offer than an idealized counter-image of urban modernity. As an illustration of the strengths of the *Heimat* novel, Rosegger's text provides an ideal foil for revealing how clearly Nabl's writing demands to be distinguished from the genre.

For although Nabl has been frequently associated with Rosegger's parochialism, his stories have little in common with the *Heimat* mode. Nabl's evocation of rural life is striking not for its engagement with the harsh realities facing contemporary agriculture, but instead for its constant awareness of *Heimat* as a fragile construct, liable to shatter on closer examination. In 'Pastorale', for example, Anna Schliffinger's decision to return to the city instead of committing suicide functions as a recognition that the literary mode cited in the text's title is condemned to an archaic past, as a fictive image irrelevant to modern life. When Johannes Arlet in *Ödhof* abandons the city for the countryside he is confronted by an insular, prejudiced and ego-centric community, which shares nothing

with contemporary fantasies of idyllic rural life. In *Der Tag der Erkenntnis*, Schiermayer's reconciliation with his wife and return to his uneventful life in the countryside can be guaranteed only by the sacrifice of his double Rudolf, whose suicide enacts a course of action which the doctor only narrowly avoids. This suicide plot enables the reader to glimpse the abyss beneath the veneer of the rural idyll which Schiermayer's life seemingly encapsulated at the outset of the text. The knowledge ('Erkenntnis') of the title is thus ambiguous. It refers not only to Schiermayer's eventual surface realization that the limited compass of domestic contentment is worth more than worldly fame, but also to the deeper insight offered to the reader, who recognizes that appearances and reality are not always one and the same.

Indeed, the reader who takes away this revelation from Nabl's text is well advised to bear it in mind when considering other texts loosely conceived as belonging to the *Heimat* genre. For, as this chapter has shown, conventional approaches to Austrian literary history have too often disregarded works on the basis of external factors, such as an apparently traditional narrative aesthetic, or rural subject matter, without seeking to probe beneath the surface. To do so, however, is to move away from the binary oppositions of modernism and realism, town and country, high culture and low culture and thereby to re-think and enrich our understanding of the plurality of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Austrian literature.

## Chapter 5

### Yesterday's Man?: Re-evaluating Nabl's Later Life and Work

#### Introduction: Unpolitical Writer or Nazi Apologist?

For a writer whose reception has been continually influenced, even dictated, by cultural-political factors, Franz Nabl was always clear and explicit on his own view of art's autonomy from the political sphere. Writing to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Peter Rosegger's death, for example, Nabl defended Rosegger's fiction from any attempt to interpret it politically, loosely invoking Goethe's famous dictum: 'Ein Dichter, der politisch wirken will, muß sich einer Partei anschließen. Tut er das, so ist er als Poet verloren. Er nimmt Abschied von der Freiheit des Geistes und zieht sich dafür die Kappe der Borniertheit über die Ohren.'<sup>253</sup> Later, in Nabl's autobiographical *Meine Wohnstätten*, the author summed up his own attitude to politics, maintaining: 'Ich hatte mich immer

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<sup>253</sup> Franz Nabl, 'Peter Rosegger: Gestorben vor 40 Jahren am 26. Juni 1918', *Wort in der Zeit*, 4 (Graz: Stiasny, 1958), 352-355 (p. 354). Eckermann actually quoted Goethe as saying: 'So wie ein Dichter politisch wirken will, muß er sich einer Partei hingeben; und sowie er dieses tut, ist er als Poet verloren; er muß seinem freien Geiste, seinem unbefangenen Überblick Lebewohl sagen und dagegen die Kappe der Borniertheit und des blinden Hasses über die Ohren ziehen.' See Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens: Münchner Ausgabe*, ed. by Karl Richter, 21 vols (Munich: Hanser, 1985-1998), XIX: *Johann Peter Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, ed. by Heinz Schlaffer, p. 460 and also Klaus Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen? Ein Kapitel Rezeptions- und Wirkungsgeschichte' in *Über Franz Nabl*, pp. 115-142 (p. 135). Reprinted in Amann, *Die Dichter und die Politik. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur nach 1918* (Vienna: Edition Falter/Deuticke, 1992), pp. 152-168.

von aller Politik ferngehalten und meine Mitmenschen nur nach ihrem inneren Wesen und nie nach Rasse, Konfession oder politischer Gesinnung beurteilt' (MW, 131).

Nabl offers implicit proof of this claim by recounting an anecdote about his friendship with a Jewish couple, Heinrich Joseph, professor of zoology at the University of Vienna, and the latter's wife Edith. Shortly before committing suicide to escape their impending transportation to a concentration camp, the Josephs returned all of their copies of Nabl's books, which contained the author's handwritten dedications, thus preventing the National Socialist regime from establishing links between them. Nabl's comments on their actions are brief and seemingly conclusive: 'Meine Empfindungen einer solchen menschlichen Hochwertigkeit gegenüber brauche ich wohl nicht zu schildern. Und auch nicht meine Gedanken über jene, die für das Zustandekommen solcher Möglichkeiten im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert verantwortlich waren' (MW, 133). Yet the fact that Nabl is unsure of the date of their death, only recalling receiving the package of returned books in either 1941 or 42 ('Es mag 1941 oder 1942 gewesen sein', MW, 132) arouses the reader's suspicions that things are perhaps less clear than Nabl makes out. This is especially the case if Nabl's overwhelmingly positive portrait, only a few pages earlier, of another close friend, the committed Nazi functionary Friedrich Pock, is recalled.<sup>254</sup>

Nabl, it seems, fails to see a contradiction in his worries about the fate of the Joseph family ('Selbstverständlich war es, daß ich mir vom Jahr 1938 an die schwersten Sorgen

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<sup>254</sup> Friedrich Pock was a provisional head of the Styrian section of the Reichsschrifttumskammer from 1938- 3 April 1939. For further information see the entry on Pock in Uwe Baur and Karin Gradwohl-Schlacher, *Literatur in Österreich, 1938-1945. Handbuch eines literarischen Systems* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2008), I: *Steiermark*, pp. 288-293.

um diese beiden mir liebgewordenen Menschen machte', MW, 132), and his praise of Pock's loyalty to the Nazi cause.<sup>255</sup>

By mentioning his connection to Pock, Nabl avoids, at least to an extent, the potential criticism that his account of his life under National Socialism is an entirely sanitized version of the truth aimed at blurring or even extinguishing all together his links to more notorious supporters of Hitler. Yet the problematic nature of his stance in *Meine Wohnstätten*, of worrying for the well-being of his Jewish friends and, at the same time, his continued personal respect for staunch Nazis like Pock, is never satisfactorily reflected upon. More importantly, yet equally unsurprisingly, is the fact that Nabl's later autobiographical works hardly ever explicitly treat the extent of his own appropriation, and that of his writing, by the National Socialist regime. Important facts, such as his acceptance of the Mozart-Preis in 1938 or his honorary doctorate at the University of Graz in 1943, go completely unmentioned.<sup>256</sup> When Nabl does refer to his actions during the National Socialist period, he exhibits, at best, a worrying level of naivety. For example, he prefaces an anecdote on his enlistment, along with Ernst Petzolt, by the Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin for a course on the creation of effective propaganda films, by stating: 'Obwohl wir nie etwas mit der Bewegung zu schaffen hatten, wurden wir beide noch während des zweiten Krieges vom Propagandaministerium in Berlin

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<sup>255</sup> See MW, p. 129: Er [Pock] blieb bei der Stange und rückte, weil er im Innersten die Entartung des Regimes ins Unmenschliche empfinden mochte, doch lieber zur Wehrmacht ein und ging nach dem Zusammenbruch, wieder im Gegensatz zu den vielen armseligen Manteldrehern, fast freiwillig ins Konzentrationslager.' In reality, Pock's internment was hardly as voluntary ('fast freiwillig') as Nabl claims. He was, in fact, arrested. See Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, p. 291.

<sup>256</sup> On the Mozart-Preis see Helga Strallhofer-Mitterbauer, *NS-Literaturpreise für österreichische Autoren. Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1994), pp. 41-47. Also Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?', p. 119.

einberufen, um eine Art Schulung für die Anfertigung wirksamer Propagandafilme durchzumachen.<sup>257</sup>

Yet this is not to say that Nabl's cooperation with the Nazis has been without public resonance. The founding in Graz of an institute for research on Styrian literature bearing Nabl's name, the Franz-Nabl-Institut für Literaturforschung, has been a source of continued controversy.<sup>258</sup> The town's most valuable literary prize, the Literaturpreis der Stadt Graz/Franz-Nabl-Preis, has periodically also been the subject of public uproar. For example, at the prize-giving in 1984 when one member of the large audience criticized the recipient, Christa Wolf, for accepting a prize named after a 'Faschist'.<sup>259</sup> Wolf responded by saying that this was not obvious to her from Nabl's texts.<sup>260</sup> Wolf, of course, is likely to have known only Nabl's earlier novels, such as *Ödhof*, written long before the rise of National Socialism. Despite this, though, the debate which emerges here is crucial for the analysis of Nabl's later life and work, not least because of the potential disparity it reveals between a writer's work and personality, their aesthetic creations and the institutional and political contexts within which they are located. It provokes a whole range of pressing questions, both general and specific, about politically and aesthetically conservative literature and its exponents during the period of National Socialism and the years leading up to it.

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<sup>257</sup> Franz Nabl, *Spiel mit Blättern*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>258</sup> See the article 'Braune Nabl Schau', *profil* (19 January 1981) with the sub-heading: 'Mit einem Nabl-Archiv ehrt die Steiermark einen zwiespältigen Dichter – den NS-Sympathisanten Franz Nabl.'

<sup>259</sup> Wolf was awarded the biennial prize for 1983. The ceremony took place in March 1984. See Heinz Musker, 'War Nabl ein Nazi?', *Neue Kronen Zeitung* (10 Mar 1984) quoted by Arlt, p. 114. The crowd gathered was so large that the prize-giving had to be moved from Forum Stadtpark to a university lecture theatre.

<sup>260</sup> Arlt, p. 114.

What was the nature of Nabl's personal and public relationship to National Socialism? Does his writing reflect or support significant aspects of fascist ideology? How does he compare to other conservative writers during the period, both personally and in terms of his degree of political engagement and awareness? Can politics be clearly divorced from literature, especially when dealing with the literature produced or published under National Socialism? Is it ethically impossible to restore a literary reputation tarnished by association with the Nazis? Does a writer's artistic achievement take precedence over dubious political sympathies? In this chapter, these questions will be approached through an investigation of Nabl's later career which focuses both on the analysis of the fiction he produced immediately before and during National Socialism, as well as exploring aspects of his biography during this period. The aim is to provide not only a fresh examination of Nabl's work from *Die Galgenfrist* (1921) onwards, but also to contribute, more broadly, to the much needed detailed and, at least intentionally, dispassionate engagement with Austrian writers whose work spans both sides of the taboo years 1938-1945.

### **From the Great War to the Corporate State: Nabl's Life and Fiction, c. 1918-1933**

Exempted from military service because of the dual consequences of an earlier typhoid infection and of a hernia sustained during a childhood game of football, Nabl spent the

First World War in Baden bei Wien.<sup>261</sup> It was here, in an apartment in the Hildegardgasse, that he wrote his third novel, *Vaterhaus*, his fourth, *Das Grab des Lebendigen* and in February 1918 began work on his fifth, *Die Galgenfrist*.<sup>262</sup> The last chapters of the latter were written in the winter of 1919, by which time the Nabls had moved into a house in the Hochstraße purchased with funds luckily rescued from the author's paternal inheritance, which would later be squandered by Nabl's brother Arnold on a cargo of heavily encumbered Argentine steel.<sup>263</sup>

Writing to Erwin Ackerknecht shortly before the novel's completion, Nabl confessed that the conception of this new work differed significantly from his previous writing:

In einigen Wochen – freilich kann es bei meiner unstäten Arbeitsweise auch Monate dauern – hoffe ich einen neuen, selbständigen Roman 'Die Galgenfrist' zum Abschluß zu bringen, ein Buch, dessen Art gleich weit vom 'Ödhof' wie vom 'Grab des Lebendigen' entfernt ist und am besten durch den ihm beigegebenen Untertitel: 'Eine erfundene, etwas aus der Form geratene Geschichte' gekennzeichnet werden mag. Meinem Empfinden nach handelt es sich dabei um den Versuch, einen ausgesprochenen Handlungsroman, oder richtiger gesagt, einen Roman, dessen Handlung nicht aus dem Inneren seiner Gestalten herauswächst, sondern durch äußeren Anstoß in Bewegung gesetzt wird, auf ein höheres, künstlerisches Niveau zu heben.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> See MW, pp. 104-105 and Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, p. 256.

<sup>262</sup> See Chapter 3 above and MW, pp. 102-103 and p. 112.

<sup>263</sup> In 1924, Arnold Nabl was persuaded to invest the remains of their father's fortune in a cargo of Argentine steel by a business associate, who turned out to be deep in debt. This misadventure was the beginning of prolonged financial hardship for Franz. See MW, pp. 106-108.

<sup>264</sup> Letter from Franz Nabl to Erwin Ackerknecht, 20 December 1919. Quoted by Eveline Eggers, 'Der Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Nabl und Erwin Ackerknecht. Beiträge zu Leben und Werk des Dichters' (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Graz, 1980), p. 146.

The basic plot which Nabl intended to transform artistically in the novel is not only a modernized variation on the Everyman theme, best known to Austrian literature from Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* (1911), but also strongly recalls Schnitzler's *Sterben*.<sup>265</sup> The protagonist, Felix Karlhofer, is a wealthy independent scholar and hypochondriac, convinced at the outset that he is suffering from a fatal condition, even though two doctors have suggested that his symptoms are actually neurotic. Persuaded by both his closest friend, Julius, and his devoted wife, Agathe, to consult an old school friend who is now a famous physician, Felix is given the (intentionally false) diagnosis that he has only two or at most three years to live. The rest of the novel shows how Felix chooses to spend the short time left to him, seeking and, at the work's climax, eventually arriving at a possible answer to the meaning of human existence.

The main difference between *Die Galgenfrist* and Nabl's earlier novels is found not in the content or subject matter of the text, but instead in the author's narrative technique. The conventional main plot is embedded in a self-reflexive narrative frame, consisting of a prologue, interlude and epilogue featuring a clearly defined authorial narrator. This marks a significant break with the narrative situation preferred in both *Ödhof* and *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, where unobtrusive omniscient narrators are employed. In contrast, the narrator of *Die Galgenfrist* apostrophizes the reader in the opening lines of the text: 'Geliebter Leser! – Ich bitte zu beachten, daß ich mit diesen

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<sup>265</sup> See Ritchie Robertson, 'Austrian Prose Fiction, 1918-1945' in Katrin Kohl and Ritchie Robertson (eds), *A History of Austrian Literature 1918-2000* (Camden House, 2006), pp. 53-74 (p. 65) and Chapter 1 above. For a detailed discussion on the similarities between *Die Galgenfrist* and *Sterben* see Gottfried Hofmann-Wellenhof, *Franz Nabls Roman "Die Galgenfrist". Eine Interpretation im Rahmen des Gesamtwerkes* (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Graz, 1979), pp. 145-165.

Worten nicht eine Einleitung oder Vorrede beginne, sondern unwiderruflich meine Geschichte selbst.<sup>266</sup> By addressing the reader in this way and, shortly afterwards, by directly thematizing the artificiality of the creative process, Nabl attempts to break the illusion of realism so central to his previous fiction, and to give the text a degree of lightness hitherto missing from his writing. He stresses that the originality of the plot is secondary to the writer's ability to form it, while simultaneously emphasizing that the text is not a work of high art, but instead an insignificant puppet-play created more for the author's own pleasure, than for the reader's:

Lieber will ich dir in dein hilfloses Gesicht hineinsagen, daß das, was du zu hören bekommen wirst, kein hohes Kunstwerk ist, gekeimt aus einer lebendigen Seele, gewachsen aus einer in fruchtbaren Boden versenkten Wurzel zu einem aufrechten, wenn auch vielfach verästelten Baum, und endlich gefällt durch die Streiche eines unerbitterlichen, folgerichtigen Schicksals, sondern nur ein kindlich-frechtes, von mir armseligem Menschen vielleicht mehr zu meiner eigenen als zu deiner Kurzweil ersonnenes Puppenspiel, dessen etwas ungelenk umherstehende Figuren du mit der Spitze deines Zeigefingers umstoßen, mit dem Hauch deines Mundes umblasen könntest. (AW II, 10)

This conscious foregrounding of the work's fictionality is intended to distance the reader from the events of the novel, and, at the same time, to pre-empt, while also poking fun at, the common criticism that his works were too heavy and dark for the average reader.<sup>267</sup>

Nabl's implicit engagement with reviewers of his work here also shines through in the language of the above passage, which takes up directly and rejects the organic,

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<sup>266</sup> Nabl, AW II: *Die Galgenfrist/Ein Mann von Gestern*, p. 7.

<sup>267</sup> For example cf. Maria Jordan, 'Das Grab des Lebendigen', *Literarisches Echo* (Berlin, 1 November 1917): "Das Grab des Lebendigen" ist kein Buch, das man in ein paar flüchtigen Stunden zur Kurzweil liest, dazu ist es zu ernst, zu schwer.' This article is falsely attributed to Hanns Johst in Nabl's 'Werkverzeichnis'.

biologizing rhetoric preferred by the conservative press when discussing his fiction. It is striking, for example, how often Nabl's qualities are described using the metaphors of natural growth and strong roots in the (native) earth.<sup>268</sup> By drawing on these critical clichés in the prologue, only in order to discard them, Nabl announces that his new novel cannot be reduced to such platitudes. Instead, as he suggests earlier in the prologue, the stage is set not only for a significant departure from the expectations raised by the author's earlier writing, but also from the constraints of literary form in general: 'Und so will ich die Form für diesmal lieber überhaupt zerschlagen, den heißen Brei noch rauchend und flüssig vor dir [dem Leser] ausschütten und dann gemeinsam mit dir zusehen, wie er allmählich erstarrt, welche Gestalt er dabei ohne fremdes Dazutun annimmt' (AW II, 8).

Yet, radical as the promises made in the novel's opening section are, the degree to which the rest of the text fulfils them is debatable. On closer analysis, the work turns out to be tightly structured, and far from breaking with traditional form, it is, in fact, organized along the lines of a drama, as its division into five acts with prelude, interlude and epilogue automatically suggests. While this gives the impression of innovation, it is neither new in literary-historical terms, nor even in Nabl's work itself. Both *Das Grab des Lebendigen* and *Vaterhaus* have a similarly dramatic structure, focusing above all on scenes of dialogue, keeping narrative description to a minimum, and with narratorial

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<sup>268</sup> For example cf. article on 'Das Grab des Lebendigen', *Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte* (April 1918): '[...] man fühlt die Liebe des Verfassers zu jeder Kleinigkeit (und er ist unendlich reich an Kleinigkeiten), seine Freude an Erzählen, sein zähes Eindringen in jede Lebenszelle, die Kunst der scheinbaren Kunstlosigkeit, die Schlichtheit des an Überfluß gewohnten, die Starke Krone, die auf starke Wurzeln deutet.'

comment almost non-existent. More generally, in English literature, from Jane Austen's novels of manners up to short stories, such as Ernest Hemingway's 'The Killers' (1927), a gradual increase in dialogue and accompanying reduction of authorial narration can be observed.<sup>269</sup> In the German realist tradition, Fontane, whom Nabl admired, embraced and perfected a similar form of dialogue-based prose fiction, reaching its pinnacle in his last novel, *Der Stechlin* (1898).<sup>270</sup>

This discrepancy between the promised break with conventional literary form made at the outset and the finished product was recognized by readers at Nabl's publisher, the Egon Fleischel Verlag, who wrote to Nabl asking him to consider doing without the frame entirely:

Was die Einteilung des Werkes betrifft, so kann man hier mit dem Autor gehen, oder man kann sich dagegen wenden, denn es könnte sich mancher enttäuscht sehen, wenn er nachweist, daß die hergebrachte Form nicht gerade "Zerschlagen" ist. Die von Ihnen geschaffenen Figuren stehen scharf ausgearbeitet vor dem Leser und, da das ganze "Spiel" konsequent durchgeführt wird, so fehlt die Begründung, wozu denn eigentlich der Verfasser betont, daß er die Figuren durcheinanderwerfen kann, wie er will, wenn er es eigentlich gar nicht tut, sondern seinen Plan streng durchführt. Die Fortlassung der Einleitung und des Zwischenspiels wollen Sie von diesem Standpunkt aus einmal betrachten und mögen dann entscheiden, ob Sie darauf bestehen oder Eingang, Zwischenspiel und Schluß einfach fortlassen, was ja wenig Mühe macht und von geringer Bedeutung für das Werk selbst ist.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> See Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, pp. 242-245.

<sup>270</sup> See Franz Nabl, 'Theodor Fontane zu seinem 125. Geburtstag' in *Tagespost* (Graz, 30 December 1944). On the similarities between Fontane and Austen see Helen Chambers, *Theodor Fontanes Erzählwerk im Spiegel der Kritik: 120 Jahre Fontane-Rezeption*, trans. by Verena Jung (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), pp. 123-126.

<sup>271</sup> Letter from Egon Fleischel Verlag, 23 July 1920. See NN/FNI, Korrespondenz, IV/30.

While financial considerations did persuade Nabl to agree to changes to the newspaper version of the novel, printed serially in the *Berliner Tagblatt* for a sum of 20.000 marks, he insisted on retaining the frame narrative in the book version eventually published by Fleischel.<sup>272</sup> Why, then, was this structure considered so important?

Quite apart from Nabl's understandable reluctance to have his creation substantially altered by his publishers, the answer must partly be found in the author's express intention to provide a distraction in the novel, both for writer and reader, from the bitter realities of post-war life. In an unpublished autobiographical sketch found in his Nachlass papers, Nabl wrote: 'Ich begann den Roman als "erfundene Geschichte" zur eigenen Ablenkung von den sich katastrophal gestaltenden Zeitereignissen und vielleicht auch zur Ablenkung der erhofften Leser.'<sup>273</sup> More important, though, is the way that the narrative frame foregrounds the experimental nature of the plot, reminding the reader that the events of the novel are artificially constructed. This is effective, for example, in countering the ethical concerns that must arise from the doctor Martinier's decision to lie to Felix, telling him he has an unusual fatal disease, when, in fact, he is perfectly healthy. If this were a realist novel, like *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, then the reader would balk at such crass unprofessionalism. If, however, we remember that the action of the main text is merely a light-hearted 'Puppenspiel', then this rather implausible development, upon which the entire plot hinges, can be accepted and our attention given to how this dramatic change in circumstances affects the protagonist and his loved ones. Similarly, the

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<sup>272</sup> See MW, p. 112.

<sup>273</sup> See NN/FNI, Werkmanuskripte, III/86 and contrast with Eggers, p. 146.

‘Puppenspiel’ pretext affects how the reader interprets Agathe’s decision, which emerges at the end of act four, to withhold from Felix that she is pregnant with his child, revealing it to her husband only at the work’s climax. This moment of ultimate selflessness, allowing Felix to leave with the courtesan Lilly Zavodska, without any attempt to bind him, contributes to an idealization of Agathe’s character verging on trivial kitsch. Yet the manner of her introduction in the prologue suggests that the narrator is well aware of this:

Um noch ein übriges zu tun, lieber Leser, – ich wende mich jetzt an dich, der du männlichen Geschlechtes bist – will ich dir verraten, daß sie das Urbild jenes Weibes ist, zu dem du dich aus den Wirbeln des Lebens hinflüchtest, wie das Kind zu der Mutter, bei dem du Ruhe suchst nach wilder Leidenschaft, Trost nach bitterer Enttäuschung, kurzum eine der Frauen, von denen man behauptet, sie seien dazu geboren, geheiratet zu werden, im Gegensatz zu jenen, welche – allein das gehört nicht mehr hierher. Ihr Antlitz ist von sanfter Schönheit übergossen und blonden Haaren schlicht umrahmt, ihre großen, grauen Augen, von denen ich für eine Sekunde die Binde hebe, sind fragend auf dich gerichtet und ihre schmalen Lippen, je nachdem es die Lage erfordert, entweder schmerzlich aufeinandergepreßt oder von einem nachsichtigen Lächeln umspielt. Schon jetzt, lieber Leser, weiß ich, daß es dir warm ums Herz aufsteigt und daß du entschlossen bist, dieser Gütigen und Hilfsbereiten männlich beizustehen, wenn sie, wie ja leicht vorauszusehen, einmal selbst in Drangsal geraten und hilfsbedürftig werden sollte, und auch du, freundliche Leserin, wirst bei aller heimlichen Eifersucht der sanften Agathe das letzte, heimliche Mitgefühl der Geschlechtsgenossin nicht versagen. (AW II, 15-16)

By consciously selecting the aspects of Agathe’s character and physical appearance from the established stock of popular stereotypes, making this explicit with formulations, such as ‘Schon jetzt, lieber Leser, weiß ich, daß es dir warm ums Herz aufsteigt’, and predicting what will inevitably happen in the course of the plot (‘wenn sie, wie ja leicht vorauszusehen, einmal selbst in Drangsal geraten und hilfsbedürftig werden sollte’), the narrator encourages us to see the action of the novel in an ironic light. Thus, when

Martiner idealizes Agathe as a paragon of feminine virtue, associating her with the Virgin Mary ('Unsere Religion hat ihren Heiland nicht umsonst aus dem Schoß eines Weibes entspringen lassen', AW II, 335), we realize that this is largely because she, perhaps like Mary, is a fictional product of human desires and wishes.

This technique of ironic distancing also affects how the reader is invited to interpret the apparently 'happy ending', where Felix's impending fatherhood enables him, in the Stifterian imagery employed by the doctor Martiner, to find meaning in life, seeing himself as but one link in the chain of eternity: 'Es genügt, wenn du als bindendes Glied in die lange Kette einfügst, die aus dem Dunkel kommt und ins Dunkel verschwindet' (AW II, 335). Without the narrative frame, the work would appear to conclude on a note of reconciliation. The narratorial comment of the epilogue, however, introduces a more critical perspective:

Auch mit Scherz und Ernst ist's ähnlich bestellt wie mit Trug und Wahrheit. Nicht immer darf man entscheiden, wann das eine beginnt und das andere aufhört, ja oft kann eines beides zugleich sein, und worüber du lachst, darüber weint dein Nachbar vielleicht. Verdrießt dich aber sogar bei einem Puppenspiel ein glückliches Ende, je nun, dann denke getrost ein Stücklein weiter, und du wirst sehen, daß Glück und Ende ebenso Dinge sind, die man von verschiedenen Seiten betrachten kann, wie Scherz und Ernst, wie Trug und Wahrheit! (AW II, 338)

The stoicism of the above passage withholds the kind of simplistic, easily digestible ending desired by the hypothetical reader of light fiction, whom the narrator in the text's prelude had imagined sitting down with his book in a cosy chair, or in a railway

carriage.<sup>274</sup> In doing so, it contributes to a productive tension between narrative frame and main plot which is the novel's greatest strength. Unfortunately for Nabl, though, this aesthetic complexity is detrimental to the text's intended lightness and, by disappointing popular expectations, probably also explains the book's lack of commercial success. With Austrian post-war inflation also reaching its peak in 1922 and the disastrous loss of his paternal inheritance in 1924, Nabl was, therefore, forced to leave Baden and life as an independent writer behind and take up a secure paid post at the *Neues Grazer Tagblatt*.

Reflecting on this subsequent period of his life in *Meine Wohnstätten*, Nabl wrote: 'Über die in Graz verbrachten Jahre vom Herbst 1924 bis wieder zum Herbst 1927 ist nicht allzuviel zu sagen. Abgesehen davon, daß sie unsere Existenz sicherten, brachten sie nichts unmittelbar Entscheidendes mit sich' (MW, 121). While this might be true of his literary work during the period, the cultural environment of the Styrian capital and the social circles into which Nabl was initiated soon after arriving in Graz had a crucial influence on his later cultural-political and ideological alignment. Nabl had acquired his post at the *Grazer Tagblatt* through connections to its part-owner, the former pan-German nationalist politician, Anton Schalk. The newspaper unsurprisingly shared Schalk's political orientation, as did Nabl's co-editors of the cultural supplement, Hans von Dettelbach and Norbert Langer. In characteristic fashion for his later autobiographical work, Nabl refers to these men by praising their work and reflecting warmly on their life-long friendship. Dettelbach, for example, is described as a

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<sup>274</sup> Cf. AW II, p. 7.

‘Kulturkritiker von ausgesprochener Bedeutung, was er später durch manche Buchveröffentlichung bewiesen hat’ (MW, 121).

What Nabl does not mention, however, is that the two most prominent of these publications, *Genialisierung der Macht. Die deutsche Aufgabe in Europa* (1933) and *Die inneren Mächte. Bekenntnisse und Bekenner* (1940), remained banned in the aftermath of the Second World War.<sup>275</sup> Under National Socialism, Dettelbach’s work had been held in high regard and officially promoted, as an entry in the ‘Liste der im Reichsgau Steiermark besonders geförderten Künstler’ testifies. He joined the NSDAP in 1932, was a founding member of the underground NS-organization, the Bund deutscher Schriftsteller Österreichs, and worked for the Austrian branch of Alfred Rosenberg’s Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur, the Österreichische Kulturkorrespondenz, as head informant for ‘Kulturpolitik’ and Music.<sup>276</sup> In this role, Dettelbach helped to categorize Austrian artists, writers and musicians according to race and political allegiance, so that Jews and other allegedly anti-German elements and could be prevented from publishing their work in Germany.<sup>277</sup> Norbert Langer would also join the NSDAP and later make a name for himself as a literary historian in the Third Reich, promoting Nabl’s fiction.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> See Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, p. 93. This volume is an indispensable resource for researching the connections between Styrian writers and the political and institutional context of National Socialism.

<sup>276</sup> For general information on the Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur see Jan-Pieter Barbian, *Literaturpolitik im Dritten Reich: Institutionen, Kompetenzen, Betätigungsfelder* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), pp. 56-70. For a detailed treatment of its role in Austria see Klaus Amann, *Der Anschluß österreichischer Schriftsteller an das Dritte Reich: Institutionelle und bewußtseinsgeschichtliche Aspekte* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), pp. 25-43.

<sup>277</sup> See Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, pp. 92-93.

<sup>278</sup> For example see Norbert Langer, ‘Franz Nabl: Zum 50. Geburtstag des Dichters’, *Wiener Neueste Nachrichten* (16 July 1933). Langer praises Nabl’s ‘Volksverbundenheit’ and postulates: ‘Vom Aesthetizismus wie vom Naturburschentum hält Nabl gleichen Abstand, vor dem einen wie vor dem anderen bewahrt ihn der Adel seiner Gesinnung, die Reinheit, die innere Größe.’

These were not the only important figures of German Nationalist and later National Socialist persuasion with whom Nabl had regular contact during his time in Graz and whom he would later publicly support and often even eulogize. Shortly after his arrival, Nabl was introduced, through his brother-in-law, to the ethnologist, Viktor von Geramb, and became initiated into the ‘Südmark-Runde’.<sup>279</sup> While the Catholic Geramb eventually came into conflict with the Nazis, despite willingness to cooperate with the regime, and was forced into premature retirement from his post at the University of Graz, other members of the circle had few such problems. Indeed, many of them went on to play significant roles in the cultural-political infrastructure of National Socialism. This is especially true of Joseph Friedrich Papesch, editor of the *Alpenländische Monatshefte*, who published a number of Nabl’s stories and essays in the 1930s, as well as re-issuing *Die Galgenfrist* in 1924/25. Papesch’s periodical was the official organ of the newly formed völkisch-conservative Deutscher Schulverein Südmark.<sup>280</sup> It existed from 1925 until 1935, when it was discontinued because Papesch’s book *Fesseln um Österreich* (1933), promoting unification with the German Reich, had attracted the wrath of Schuschnigg’s authorities.<sup>281</sup> Papesch joined the then illegal NSDAP in 1934 and was co-

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<sup>279</sup> See Franz Nabl, ‘Wege mit Viktor von Geramb’ in Nabl, *Die Zweite Heimat*, pp. 109-115 and Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, p. 113. The ‘Südmark-Runde’ was an informal group of right-wing writers and intellectuals with close connections to the DSVS, which met weekly in the Admonter Keller and later in the Opernweinstube in Graz. See MW, p. 122.

<sup>280</sup> The periodical was also explicitly recommended by the NS publication *Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur*. See Sigurd Paul Schleichl, ‘Literatur in österreichischen Zeitschriften der dreißiger Jahre. Mit einem bibliographischen Anhang’ in Klaus Amann and Albert Berger, *Österreichische Literatur der dreißiger Jahre: Ideologische Verhältnisse, Institutionelle Voraussetzungen, Fallstudien* (Böhlau: Vienna, 1985), pp. 178-211 (p. 198 and p. 201). On Nabl’s publications in the *Alpenländische Monatshefte* see also Adelheid Schmutzhard, ‘Franz Nabl. Johannes Krantz: Erzählungen in einem Rahmen’ (unpublished doctoral thesis: University of Innsbruck, 1979), pp. 23-31.

<sup>281</sup> See Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, p. 275.

leader of the illegal Gaukulturamt. After the Anschluss, he held a number of important positions in Styria's NS-administration, being made official head of the Styrian Reichstatthalter's department for 'Erziehung, Volksbildung und Kultur' in 1940. He was also a member of the SS from 1938-1943, leaving only when his disabled daughter was executed under the Nazi euthanasia laws.<sup>282</sup> Through the 'Südmark-Runde', Nabl also became close to Papesch's school-friend and later regional head of the Reichsschrifttumskammer, Friedrich Pock, who would offer Nabl an official position in the organization, on the condition that he joined the NSDAP.<sup>283</sup> Unwilling to accept this condition, Nabl refused the post.<sup>284</sup> Another of Nabl's close friends in the group, Hans Kloepfer, the dialect poet and author of a notorious poem in praise of Hitler, had no such reluctance. He joined the Nazi party in 1938, after a long and enthusiastic engagement with both the DSVS and, like Dettelbach, the *Österreichische Kulturkorrespondenz*. When Kloepfer died in 1944, both Hitler and Goebbels contributed wreaths for his grave.<sup>285</sup>

If the ease with which Nabl became accepted into these circles suggests that he was, at the very least, more than tolerant of völkisch-conservative ideology, his literary work in the late twenties and early thirties bears little testament to this. His successful play, *Trieschübel* (1925), written shortly before his move to Graz, continued in the same vein as *Die Galgenfrist* by treating the existential crisis of a wealthy protagonist (this time an aristocratic bachelor, Baron Trieschübel), who is offered the chance to find new

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<sup>282</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 272-279.

<sup>283</sup> See MW, p. 128.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>285</sup> On Kloepfer see Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, pp. 180-188.

meaning in life, when an ex-lover and former prostitute, Frau Krupki, reveals to him that they have a grown-up daughter together.<sup>286</sup> After gladly accepting his long-lost child, Elisabeth, Trieschübel discovers that her mother had tried to force her into prostitution. When he attempts to banish Frau Krupki, removing her corrupting influence, Krupki is angered and tells Trieschübel that Elisabeth is not really his daughter after all. The psychological impact of this sudden change in his fortunes causes the Baron to commit suicide. This tragic ending, of course, differs significantly from *Die Galgenfrist* but the theme is essentially the same. Both works focus on the private, but universal, issue of how to provide one's personal life with greater meaning. Contemporary social or political issues are either ignored entirely, or dismissed as unimportant. Thus, although Trieschübel is an ex-politician, he has retired from public life to live a life of leisure, telling his friend, Dr Römisch, who deplors his passivity: 'Die einzige berechtigte Frage bleibt die, ob die Welt dadurch, daß ich mein Amt niedergelegt habe, Schaden gelitten hat.'<sup>287</sup>

When Nabl does engage with socio-political topics, his treatment of them is staunchly conservative but hardly reflective of the Nationalist politics propagated by other members of the 'Südmark-Runde'. For example, in the comedy *Schichtwechsel* (1928), set during a workers' strike at a munitions factory, a former aristocrat and soldier called Obersperg, who has fallen on hard times after the First World War, chooses to find work as a chauffeur for a taxi firm, rather than exploiting his powerful connections.

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<sup>286</sup> *Trieschübel* was performed at over 80 different theatres in Germany and Nabl earned enough in royalties to leave his job at the *Grazer Tagblatt* and return to writing full-time. Cf. MW, pp. 133-134.

<sup>287</sup> Franz Nabl, *Trieschübel. Eine tragische Begebenheit in 3 Akten* (Berlin: Volksbühnen-Verlags-und Vertriebs-GmbH, 1925), p. 19.

When he saves the life of the wealthy industrialist, Basch, he switches employer becoming Basch's private driver. Despite his valiant attempts to fit in to his new working-class life, Obersperg's gentlemanly manners, appearance and ethos repeatedly betray him, not without effect on Basch's daughter Grete. This arouses the suspicions of Gareis, the factory-owner's unpleasant left-wing nephew, who hopes to marry Grete and inherit the factory. When Obersperg is asked to help out as a waiter one evening, he is recognized by one of the guests, Princess Barmstein. Taking pleasure in this discovery, the Princess tells an anonymous but thinly veiled anecdote recounting Obersperg's past, and, realizing that Grete is attracted to him, sees to it they get to dance with each other. This is too much for Gareis, who insults Obersperg, attempting to unmask him as a conman. In response, the aristocrat challenges him to a duel, thereby inadvertently giving himself away. In the 'Nachspiel', with Obersperg's real identity now established, the striking workers set the factory on fire. This enables Obersperg to prove himself once more by helping Basch prevent the blaze from spreading. At the end, with the factory essentially in ruins and with no remaining chance of marrying Grete, Gareis defects to the workers. Obersperg, on the other hand, is tricked into thinking that Basch will have to start his business from scratch, and agrees to work for him in the future. In actual fact, though, the building is well-insured, and Basch will now be able to build a better, more modern factory with the money.

While the play's humour is largely provided by Obersperg's unsuccessful attempts to hide his noble background in front of an audience in the know, the serious underlying implication of the plot is that social class goes deeper than the skin, and that

changes to the social structure cannot alter traditional values preserved by the upper-classes. The metaphorical ‘Schichtwechsel’ of the title is thus ineffective, since aristocrats like Obersperg remain aristocratic and upstarts, like the left-wing sympathizer Gareis, who comes from a humble background, must ultimately reveal their true colours, showing that their socialist politics is motivated by egotism and resentment. Nevertheless, the play’s conservative rhetoric is not entirely one-sided. The close relationship between Grete and her maid Sophie ends with the exchange of the informal ‘Du’ at the end of the play, demonstrating that social harmony is possible, so long as it is based on personal rather than political criteria.<sup>288</sup>

Moreover, even while Nabl’s literary work exhibits other stereotypical predilections of the era in which he was writing, few of these can be regarded as evidence of proto-fascist ideology. For example, when Nabl chooses Slavic names for his negatively portrayed lascivious female characters, such as the selfish courtesan Boschena Pospischil (alias Lilly Zavodska) in *Die Galgenfrist*, or the duplicitous ex-prostitute Frau Krupki in *Trieschübel*, he is actually participating in a common practice of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Austrian literature, occurring also in works by untarnished writers, such as Ferdinand von Saar’s earlier novella *Die Troglodytin* (1887) and Robert Musil’s contemporary story *Tonka* (1924). Indeed, Nabl’s Slavic females are nowhere as exaggerated as the scapegoats in nineteenth-century *Heimat* novels, such as the Polish forestry official Ladislaus in Rosegger’s *Jakob der Letzte* or the obnoxious businessman

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<sup>288</sup> See Franz Nabl, *Schichtwechsel. Eine Komödie mit Vor- und Nachspiel* (Berlin: Verlag Österheld, 1928), p. 115.

Harrasowitz in Polenz's *Der Büttnerbauer*, both of whom also have stereotype Jewish characteristics. On the contrary, Nabl's early writing places anti-Semitism in a critical light portraying the ignorant prejudice of the rural community in *Ödhof* with ironic scepticism and regarding the 'Häuteljud' Simon, whom they mistreat, with sympathy.<sup>289</sup>

Even in Nabl's later fiction, written after his initiation into the 'Südmark-Runde' in Graz, Nabl refrains from anti-Semitism in situations where it would be almost commonplace to expect it, such as in the negative depiction of journalists.<sup>290</sup> In the novel *Ein Mann von Gestern* (1933/1935) the unscrupulous editor, Komarek, who reprimands his theatre critic for a scathing review of a play featuring a talentless female lead, who is also the lover of a major investor, shares traits with many an anti-Semitic caricature in the period, yet he is not characterized as Jewish by Nabl. Even Nabl's most reactionary novella *Der Fund* (1937), which features a duplicitous, calculating journalist in the role of a villain, is free of anti-Semitism.

Nevertheless, a number of Nabl's essays published in the early 1930s do reveal signs that he was becoming more closely aligned with the right-wing ideology of his associates in Graz. For example, in 'Der Entwicklungsroman als Bildungsbuch', published in Papesch's *Alpenländische Monatshefte* in 1932, Nabl begins by differentiating between the 'Unterhaltungsleser' and the 'Bildungsleser', defining the

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<sup>289</sup> Cf. AW III, pp. 106-107, Handke, 'Franz Nabls Größe und Kleinlichkeit', pp. 34-35 and Chapter 4 above.

<sup>290</sup> On the literary image of the Jewish journalist see Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 210-211. Robertson's examples include Naphtali in Arno Holz's play *Sozialaristokraten* (1896), Dackl in Hermann Bahr's *Das Tschaperl* (1898), Lilienstein in Hugo Ball's posthumously published Dada novel *Tenderenda der Phantast* (1967) and Schnitzler's exploitation of the stereotype for comic effect in *Fink und Fliederbusch* (1917).

latter as a reader who looks for intellectual enrichment and a fictional substitute for ‘einen geistigen Führer’ in works of literature.<sup>291</sup> He then proceeds to survey the tradition of the German ‘Bildungsroman’, considering whether classic nineteenth-century novels, such as Stifter’s *Der Nachsommer*, Keller’s *Der grüne Heinrich* (1854-55/1879-80) and Raabe’s *Abu Telfan* (1867) still have something to offer the contemporary ‘Bildungsleser’. The central problem here is the predominance of idle heroes (‘untätige Helden’) rather than active protagonists in these texts, which prompts Nabl to ask:

Ob es wünschenswert ist, daß gerade derjenige, der von seinem Buch nicht nur Zeitvertreib, sondern Erweiterung des geistigen Kreises, ja vielleicht sogar Hilfe und Führung verlangt, immer wieder an solche Werke gerät, die den Nichtstuer im staats- und gesellschafterhaltenden Sinn so auffällig in den Vordergrund rücken. (EaB, 64)

To his credit, Nabl does eventually conclude that the danger posed by this is balanced by the advantages of these classic texts, for example, in their subtle resistance to the increasing mechanization of human life. Yet, in the closing paragraph, he predicts that the modern post-war age will herald in ‘eine Blütezeit für den Entwicklungsroman des werktätigen Menschen’ (EaB, 65). Thus, he argues, the regrettable relapse of Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (1924) will be a thing of the past, as works such as Hans Grimm’s *Volk ohne Raum* (1926) carry on from where Gustav Frenssen’s *Klaus Hinrich Baas* (1909) and E.

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<sup>291</sup> See Franz Nabl, ‘Der Entwicklungsroman als Bildungsbuch’, *Alpenländische Monatshefte*, 10/2 (Graz: Alpenland-Buchhandlung Südmark, 1932), 59-65 (p. 59). Henceforth cited in text as EaB with page numbers. The essay is also discussed by Johann Holzner in: ‘Anerkennung und Kritik bürgerlicher Lebensformen in Franz Nabls Erzählung „Der Fund“’ in *Über Franz Nabl*, pp. 83-98 (pp. 85-86).

G. Kolbenheyer's *Paracelsus* trilogy (1917-1926) had left off.<sup>292</sup> This judgement against the modernism of Thomas Mann and in favour of lesser völkisch-conservative writers is characteristic of Nabl's public displays of aesthetic and political allegiance in the rest of the decade.<sup>293</sup>

This impression is further strengthened by an earlier essay, entitled 'Ein gelöstes Anschlußproblem' (1930).<sup>294</sup> In this short text, Nabl outlines his position in respect to what was perhaps the central objective of the Austrian völkisch-conservative faction in the period, the unification of German-speaking Austria with the German Reich. Given that it was also reprinted in Papesch's *Alpenländische Monatshefte*, the mouthpiece of the DSVS, it is hardly surprising that Nabl voices his support for the Anschluss. Yet the manner in which he approaches this conclusion is important, since it is characteristic of his later behaviour both during the rise of fascism in Germany, and in the aftermath of Austria's annexation by Hitler. Nabl argues that it is impossible for the professional Austrian writer to resist the unification with Germany. Quite simply, the power of the German market and, for the dramatist, the greater number of theatres in the German Reich, when compared with the provincial structure of thinly populated Austria, offers greater opportunity and financial prospects for Austrian authors. Thus, Nabl asks:

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<sup>292</sup> E. G. Kolbenheyer was to become one of the most successful writers in the Third Reich and was ranked among the six most important authors in the so-called 'Gottbegnadeten-Liste' compiled by Hitler and the 'Reichsministerium für Propaganda' in 1944.

<sup>293</sup> See also Nabl's lectures given in 1934 at the University of Graz and printed as Nabl, 'Deutsches Drama und Deutsche Erzählung 1900-1930'.

<sup>294</sup> Franz Nabl, 'Ein gelöstes Anschlußproblem', *Jahrbuch des Stadttheaters Halle a. d. Saale* (1930). Also reprinted in *Alpenländische Monatshefte*, 10/4 (Graz: Alpenland-Buchhandlung Südmark, 1933), 156-157. Quotations are from this reprint and are henceforth cited in text as EgA with page numbers.

Müßte darum aber nicht jeder österreichische Autor, dem diese oder eine ähnliche Förderung durch Verlag und Zeitschrift zuteil wird und der das ein wenig peinliche Gefühl vermeiden will, sein Leben mit Abfällen von fremder Tafel zu fristen, sich schon aus Selbstachtung, als das empfinden und bekennen, was er in Wirklichkeit immer war: als Teil des großen deutschen Ganzen? (EgA, 157)

As the next section will demonstrate, Nabl was not afraid to follow his own advice in the coming years as the increasingly radical politicization of the Austrian literary scene progressed towards its climax.

### **The Politics of the Unpolitical: Nabl and National Socialism, c. 1933-1945**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, many Austrians insisted that the country had been a victim of Nazi expansionism, eagerly accepting the official position of the Allied forces that defined their state as a liberated, rather than defeated territory.<sup>295</sup> Yet, as a growing body of research has begun to reveal, this helpful excuse for historical amnesia can no longer hide the extent to which the cultural-political situation in Austria, both during the period of the Corporate State and before, not only smoothed the path of the German ‘invaders’, but enabled the rapid establishment on Austrian soil of the National

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<sup>295</sup> See Amann, *Der Anschluß österreichischer Schriftsteller an das Dritte Reich*, p. 16.

Socialist regime's repressive institutions and organizations.<sup>296</sup> As far as Austrian literature is concerned, the prestige of canonical writers from the inter-war period, such as Karl Kraus, Robert Musil, Franz Werfel and Hermann Broch, has tended to obscure the extent to which völkisch-nationalist and often provincial writers actually came to dominate the domestic literary scene, and tellingly also the Austrian contribution to the German book market, in the period before the Anschluss.<sup>297</sup> Indeed, it became clear long before 1938 which Austrian writers were not only tolerant of the Nazis, but willing to allow their works and personalities to be appropriated by them.

The key turning-point in this process of the political polarization of Austrian literature during the 1930s was the eleventh Congress of the International PEN club at Dubrovnik on 25-28 May 1933. Following Hitler's appointment as chancellor in January, it was not long before the large-scale persecution of Jewish writers in Germany began. In April and May 1933, the so-called 'Aktion wider den undeutschen Geist' swept across the Reich's universities, reaching its climax with the spectacular book-burnings of 10 May.<sup>298</sup> When the German delegates at Dubrovnik were challenged by PEN General Secretary Hermon Ould over their response to the mistreatment of intellectuals and book-

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<sup>296</sup> The indispensable study of the cultural Anschluss is still Amann, *Der Anschluß österreichischer Schriftsteller an das Dritte Reich*. For an overview of the role played by writer's organizations in this process see also Ernst Fischer, 'Zur Geschichte österreichischer Schriftsteller Organisationen in den dreißiger Jahren. Überlegungen und Thesen' in *Österreichische Literatur der dreißiger Jahre: Ideologische Verhältnisse, Institutionelle Voraussetzungen, Fallstudien*, ed. by Klaus Amann and Albert Berger (Böhlau: Vienna, 1985), pp. 147-149 (p. 149) and Gerhard Renner, "'Hitler-Eid für Österreichische Schriftsteller?'" Über österreichische Schriftsteller-Organisationen der dreißiger Jahre' in *ibid.*, pp. 150-163. For more detailed information consult Renner, *Österreichische Schriftsteller und der Nationalsozialismus (1933-1945). Der "Bund der deutschen Schriftsteller Österreichs" und der Aufbau der Reichsschrifttumskammer in der "Ostmark"* (Frankfurt am Main: Buchhändler-Vereinigung GmbH, 1986).

<sup>297</sup> Amann, *Der Anschluß österreichischer Schriftsteller an das Dritte Reich*, p. 17.

<sup>298</sup> See Barbian, pp. 128-141.

burnings in Germany, and the anti-fascist writer Ernst Toller was allowed to address the congress on the issue, they left the meeting in an act of protest.<sup>299</sup> They were not alone: delegates from Holland, German-speaking Switzerland and the official Austrian delegate, Grete Urbanitzky, all joined them in a show of solidarity.

Urbanitzky was acting in direct breach of the decision in favour of neutrality reached by the Viennese PEN centre prior to the conference and her actions precipitated a heated debate back in Vienna, where an AGM was called for 28 June. The result of this was a decision (25 votes to 15), to issue a collective resolution making amends for the silence of the Austrian PEN at Dubrovnik by publicly defending Austrian writers and intellectuals being persecuted in Germany. However, a number of prominent members, including Max Mell, Karl Schönherr and surprisingly also Franz Werfel refused to sign the declaration and the day after its publication a host of völkisch-conservative writers resigned from the PEN club, including Mirko Jelusich, Bruno Brehm and Robert Hohlbaum. Then, on 7 July, an open letter to the president of the Viennese PEN club was published in the *Neue Wiener Zeitung*. This text announced a further wave of formal resignations from writers in the Austrian provinces, who apparently could not accept the very fact that a resolution had been made in their name by the 'jüdischen und jüdisch orientierten Mitglieder' present at the AGM, and who also rejected outright any

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<sup>299</sup> See Klaus Amann, *P.E.N.: Politik, Emigration, Nationalsozialismus: ein österreichischer Schriftstellerclub* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1984), p. 28.

interference made into the affairs of Germany, which they described as their ‘Brudernation’.<sup>300</sup> Among the list of authors who signed this letter was Franz Nabl.<sup>301</sup>

This decision places in a questionable light Nabl’s later assertion: ‘Ich hatte mich immer von aller Politik ferngehalten’ (MW, 131). For signing this declaration was tantamount to a public display of support for National Socialism and cannot be excused by an alleged indifference, or even misunderstanding of the political situation. By doing so, Nabl identified himself as a sympathizer with the Nazi cause, at a time when the Austrian NSDAP was on the brink of being banned and, as his essay ‘Ein gelöstes Anschlußproblem’ had already indicated, secured himself access to publication opportunities in the Reich, when other Austrian authors who spoke out against the regime were finding themselves edged out of the German literary market. As Franz Theodor Csokor put it, the dilemma facing writers in the period was essentially: ‘Gutes Geschäft – oder gutes Gewissen?’.<sup>302</sup> Nabl’s answer was clear and, as the events unfolded, evidently also successful.

In 1933, for example, Nabl’s name was included in a list of books recommended for public libraries compiled by the Reichsschrifttumskammer and also appeared on a similar list of recommended Austrian authors issued by the Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur.<sup>303</sup> The latter was perhaps unsurprising given that Nabl had by now become actively involved with its illicit Austrian branch, liaising with the Österreichische

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<sup>300</sup> See Amann, *P.E.N.*, p. 36.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>302</sup> Quoted by *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Kulturkorrespondenz as an informant for theatre and literary criticism.<sup>304</sup> In 1936, he was awarded the Ring des Eckart-Bundes.<sup>305</sup> Yet this was only the beginning of his ascendancy during the Third Reich, which reached its zenith after the Anschluss. In 1938, Nabl was the first winner, following Austria's annexation, of the prestigious Mozart-Preis awarded by the Hamburger Goethe Stiftung.<sup>306</sup> The previous winners included Josef Weinheber (1936) and Max Mell (1937). An important and underrated lyric poet, Weinheber numbered among the most devoted of all National Socialist writers. He joined the party in 1931, wrote an ode celebrating Hitler's road building policies ('Ode an die Straßen Adolf Hitlers'), and committed suicide at the end of the war.<sup>307</sup> The Catholic dramatist, Mell, had already won the Dramatikerpreis des Bühnenvolksbundes in 1933 for his play *Sieben gegen Theben* (1931), travelling to Nazi Germany to accept it, and was president of the Bund der deutschen Schriftsteller Österreichs from 1936-1938, the Corporate State's leading illicit NS writers organization.<sup>308</sup> Only weeks after the announcement that he was to receive the Mozart-Preis, Nabl travelled to Germany for the ninth Berliner Dichterwoche, along with the fascist writers Sepp Keller, Hans Kloepfer, Herman Stüppack, Franz Tumler and Ines Widmann.<sup>309</sup> This event was organized by the NS-Gemeinschaft 'Kraft durch Freude'. Nabl read from his novellas 'Die Dogge' (1933)

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<sup>304</sup> Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, p. 257.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>306</sup> Nabl shared the prize with Josef Pöll and was presented with it in Salzburg on 3 June 1938. See *ibid.*, pp. 257-258 and Strallhofer-Mitterbauer, p. 41.

<sup>307</sup> For a succinct, balanced discussion of Weinheber see Katrin Kohl, 'Austrian Poetry, 1918-2000' in Katrin Kohl and Ritchie Robertson (eds), *A History of Austrian Literature 1918-2000* (Camden House, 2006), pp. 127-161 (pp. 135-138).

<sup>308</sup> Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, pp. 243-244. Nabl was also a member of the BdSÖ from 1936/37 onwards.

<sup>309</sup> See Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?', p. 119 and pp. 136-137.

and ‘Pilatus im Credo’ (1935), as well as from his poetry and his performance was praised by the *Völkischer Beobachter* as: ‘zweifellos den künstlerischen Höhepunkt der Woche’.<sup>310</sup>

Whether Nabl’s contribution was the artistic high-point or not, the Berliner Dichterwoche was quite clearly a political event, intended to showcase the support of authors from newly annexed Austria for Hitler’s regime. This is made explicit by the scrapbook Nabl was sent by the head of the ‘Deutsches Volksbildungswerk’ after the occasion, which thanks him for his participation, referring directly to the positive resonance the readings had across the entire Reich.<sup>311</sup> This was not the only reading at which Nabl was present: numerous cuttings of newspaper reviews found in his posthumous papers show that he was a regular participant at such events, maintaining and solidifying his position of one of Austria’s most celebrated writers during National Socialism.<sup>312</sup> It was, thus, no surprise when Nabl was elected to an honorary doctorate by the University of Graz on his sixtieth birthday in 1943. This was the most significant, official celebration of his status. The ceremony was not only attended by Gauleiter Sigfried Uiberreither, but Nabl also received personal letters of congratulation from the president of the Reichsschriftumskammer, Hanns Johst, and Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> See Anon., ‘9. Berliner Dichterwoche’, *Völkische Beobachter* (Munich, 3 May 1938).

<sup>311</sup> This letter (18 May 1938) is part of a scrapbook found in an unmarked folder amongst Nabl’s posthumous papers. See NN/FNI.

<sup>312</sup> Many of these articles found in NN/FNI are not listed in Nabl’s ‘Werkverzeichnis’, and much material exists which has yet to be organized and analysed by scholars.

<sup>313</sup> See Amann, ‘Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?’, p. 121 and Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, pp. 258-259.

Since Nabl said and wrote little, both at the time and later, on this period of his life, it is impossible to establish accurately to what extent he was actually fully aware that the newfound promotion and celebration of both his work and personality by the Nazis served a political function in legitimizing the regime. Irrespective of this, though, the degree and nature of his involvement outlined here demonstrates that he was, at the very least, guilty of not only willingly cooperating with the regime, but also actively exploiting it for his own personal benefit. Nevertheless, when compared to a number of his close friends and other writers from the same völkisch-conservative and provincial milieu, it is also true that Nabl was neither a committed nor an ideological National Socialist. As we have already seen, he refused to join the Nazi party when explicitly offered the opportunity to take on a position of responsibility in the Reichsschrifttumskammer by Friedrich Pock. No contribution by Nabl is to be found in the notorious *Bekennnisbuch österreichischer Dichter* (1938), published by the BdSÖ to enthusiastically welcome the Anschluss. Kloepfer, Weinheber, Mell, Mirko Jelusich, Waggerl, Paula Grogger and Josef Friedrich Perkonig were, for example, all among the authors represented in the anthology.<sup>314</sup> When Nabl did contribute to similar anthologies during National Socialism, the texts he submitted were decidedly unpolitical in content. For example, for publication in the anthology, *Sonderheft zur Heimkehr Deutsch-Österreichs ins Reich* published in the journal *Das Innere Reich*, Nabl selected the short text, ‘Der Hundszahn’, a chapter from his *Steirische Lebenswanderung* about his explorations together with his late wife in the hills surrounding Graz in search of this

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<sup>314</sup> See Renner, *Österreichische Schriftsteller und der Nationalsozialismus*, p. 277.

native flower.<sup>315</sup> At a push, and considering its place of publication, the imagery of this piece is not entirely resistant to a political interpretation, especially its concluding lines:

So spielten sie, die beiden erwachsenen Menschen, und ahnten nicht, daß es das Spiel von der ewigen Wiederkehr war, vom Ausbruch aus der langen, bangen Winternacht ans Frühlingssonnenlicht, dem das Menschenherz so gut entgegenhungert und entgegenkeimt, wie die schöne, liebliche Blume mit dem unholden Namen, die gemeine Zahnlinie, der Hundszahn ... Erythronium dens canis ...<sup>316</sup>

In a collection explicitly celebrating the Anschluss, the long-awaited emergence in spring of the indigenous dog's tooth violet after a bleak, dark winter, might naturally be read as a metaphorical reflection of recent political events, which put an end to the separation by national boundaries of the pan-German 'Volk'. Nevertheless, in its originally intended context, the passage is essentially devoid of socio-political connotations. The irrational, mythologizing view of man's place in the eternal circle of life expressed here, refers not to the process of political history, returning Austria to its ancestral home as part of a greater German Reich, but instead aims to provide solace for an author coming to terms with the loss of his wife, whom he addresses in the poem 'An Stelle einer Widmung' at the start of the *Steirische Lebenswanderung*. This distinction is important, as Klaus Amann has shown, since it brings out the importance of external factors, such as where

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<sup>315</sup> The anthology began with Weinheber's poem 'Hymnus auf die Heimkehr', which ends 'Führer, heilig und stark,/ Führer, wir grüßen dich!/Heimat, glücklich und frei./Heimat, wir grüßen dich!' See Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?', p. 122. For details of Nabl's publications in NS-Anthologies see Baur/Gradwohl-Schlacher, p. 258. On *Das Innere Reich* also Schmutzhard, pp. 36-37.

<sup>316</sup> Franz Nabl, *Steirische Lebenswanderung*, 3rd edn (Graz: Leykam, 1942), p. 104. Henceforth cited in text as SL with page numbers. The version of 'Der Hundszahn' printed in the anthology *Sonderheft zur Heimkehr Deutsch-Österreichs ins Reich* is slightly altered. See Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?', who also recognizes the possibility of creating a metaphorical connection between the flower of the text and the political context of the Anschluss, arguing, though, that this would require 'immerhin eines gewissen Maßes an literarischer Sensibilität', p. 122.

works were published and alongside which other authors a writer's texts appeared, in influencing how they were received and interpreted. In other words, Nabl's unpolitical writing was never just that, since it was always located in, often rather unfortunate, institutional, and thus also political, contexts.<sup>317</sup>

On the other hand, when considered retrospectively, Amann's critique of *Steirische Lebenswanderung* as a paradigm of the 'immer aktuelle Frage der politischen Funktionalisierung des Unpolitischen', fails to sufficiently acknowledge its own politically motivated rhetoric.<sup>318</sup> First presented as a paper at a symposium at the University of Graz celebrating the fifth anniversary of Nabl's death in 1979, Amann's contribution was interpreted, in *profil*, as an expression of a truth that 'die Grazer Nabl-Beschauer seit vielen Jahren verdrängen möchten: daß der pietätvoll verehrte steirische Literaturpatron „sich vor den nationalsozialistischen Propagandakarren spannen hat lassen“'.<sup>319</sup> While this journalistic response is evidently sensationalist, the desire for a reckoning with the Nazi past, and with Austria's only imperfectly de-nazified post-war cultural establishment, is also present as an underlying current in Amann's line of argument. The salient question is: do his criteria, according to which the failure to engage explicitly with political themes in works of literature is equivalent to admitting support for the ruling party, help us to reach a balanced understanding of the allegedly

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<sup>317</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 121-124.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>319</sup> See 'Braune Nabl Schau', *profil* (19 Jan 1981).

‘unpolitical’ literature of the Nazi era?<sup>320</sup> Might it not be the case that this approach obscures important differences between the conservative writers of the period?

A comparison of Nabl’s *Steirische Lebenswanderung* with other Styrian *Heimat* books published in the 1930s, such as Hans Kloepfer’s *Sulmtal und Kainachboden* (1936) and Max Mell’s *Steirischer Lobgesang* (1939), provides a useful illustration of this point. As their titles suggest, all of these works are devoted to a greater or lesser extent to the evocation of the Styrian landscape and its people and thereby serve as a means for both author and reader to define and reinforce positive regional identities.<sup>321</sup> On the surface, they thus rank among the least ‘political’ fictional texts, turning away from current, global affairs and focusing on the timeless nature of *Heimat*. While this amounts to ethical bankruptcy for critics such as Amann and Doppler, or more famously for politically engaged authors like Brecht, the extent of this failure is, however, not the same in each individual text.<sup>322</sup> For example, the original version of Mell’s *Steirischer Lobgesang* contains a chapter entitled ‘Begebenheit aus den österreichischen Unruhen’, which was omitted from editions published after 1945.<sup>323</sup> This section portrays the Styrian farmer, Josef Marginder, sentenced to death for his role in the NSDAP-Putsch of July 1934, as a hero, who died as a martyr for the Nazi cause: ‘Wir zählen den armen

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Amann, ‘Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?’, p. 134.

<sup>321</sup> This helps to explain the continuing popularity of these texts after the Second World War. See Bernhard Doppler, ‘Landschaft im Heimatbuch: Beobachtungen zu Franz Nabls “Steirische Lebenswanderung”’ in *Über Franz Nabl*, pp. 143-175 (p. 150).

<sup>322</sup> See Bertolt Brecht, ‘An die Nachgeborenen’ in *Gesammelte Gedichte*, 4 vols, ed. by Elisabeth Hauptmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), II, p. 723: ‘Was sind das für Zeiten, wo/Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist/Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt!’ Also cited by Doppler, p. 144.

<sup>323</sup> Contrast Max Mell, *Steirischer Lobgesang* (Leipzig: Insel, 1939) and ‘Steirischer Lobgesang’ in Mell, *Ausgewählte Werke*, 4 vols (Vienna: Amandus Verlag, 1962), IV: *Steirische Lobgesang, Reden, Aufsätze*, pp. 7-133. See also Doppler, p. 146.

Sepp zu unsern Helden [...] sein Andenken geht nicht unter bei uns, darüber brauche ich nicht viele Worte zu machen.’<sup>324</sup> The political sympathies of the author are, therefore, quite clear, even in this ‘unpolitical’ *Heimat* book. Mell’s support of the ruling party is not only implicit.

This is also true of sections of Hans Kloepfer’s *Sulmtal und Kainbachboden*, such as the chapter, ‘Politik und Bauerntum’, where the author describes his engagement for the NSDAP in rural Western Styria.<sup>325</sup> During a speech at an inn, the author becomes aware that it is impossible and unnecessary to preach to the Alpine peasant about the völkisch-nationalist ethos, since it is already naturally ingrained in his character:

Es ist zwecklos, unnötig, fast unerlaubt, dem richtigen Almbauern völkisches Empfinden zu predigen. Es lebt tief und unbewußt in seinem uralten Volkstum, in seinem Wesen, in seiner Arbeit, wie der Saft im Holze, das Blut im Körper. Es kommt ihm gottlob nicht als etwas Äußerliches vor, als Kleid, das man ausbürsten, ausbügeln, flicken, wohl gar wenden kann. Er braucht es nicht zu “betätigen” und kann es auch nicht. Wie wenn man ihn aufforderte, die Natur zu bewundern. Er ist sie; ist das letzte ursprüngliche Stück Mensch, eingefügt in den Rahmen der Natur mit all ihrer Selbstverständlichkeit, ihrem Gleichmute, mit ihrer Härte und ihrem unnennbaren Reize. (KSK, 264)

Kloepfer’s language draws on numerous organic metaphors taken from the stock of popular völkisch-conservative clichés, justifying political ideology through poetic claims to the primitive roots of the Germanic farmer in the earth. The Alpine peasant is born with an innate understanding of what is right, evoked by the (conveniently racial) image

<sup>324</sup> Max Mell, *Steirischer Lobgesang* (Leipzig: Insel, 1939), p. 195.

<sup>325</sup> See Hans Kloepfer, *Sulmtal und Kainachboden: ein steirisches Bilderbuch* (Graz: Verlag der Alpenlandbuchhandlung Südmark, 1936), pp. 261-267 (p. 261): ‘Am Lichtmeßsonntag fuhr ich vor Jahren im Schlitten ins hinterste Gebirgsdorf unter der Alm, um auf Ersuchen einer nationalen Partei unter dem Landvolk für sie zu werben.’ Henceforth cited in text as KSK with page numbers.

of blood, strengthened through its equivalence with the sap of a tree. The flip-side of this, as so often, is anti-Semitism. The farmers, who were initially sceptical of the narrator's speech, warm to him when he blames the loss of the First World War on the Jews: 'Aber bei den Anklagen gegen das unheilvolle Eingreifen des Judentums im Kriege wurden sie wärmer' (KSK, 263). In the second half of the text, the narrator recounts an anecdote told to him by a crippled local hunter, who as a prisoner of war in Russia fled captivity, suffering severe frostbite in his hands, rather than being forced to fight against his comrades. This heroic bravery is not unique, but, on the contrary, as Klopfer concludes: 'Solcher stillen Helden gab es Tausende in unseren deutschen Alpenländern!' (KSK, 267). Overall, then, while this text has a regional focus, praising the Western Styrian peasant, it does so in the pursuit of concrete political goals.

While Nabl's *Steirische Lebenswanderung* also portrays the inhabitants of rural Austria in an overwhelmingly positive fashion, Nabl's interest in such characters notably lacks the ideological undercurrent found in Mell and Klopfer's texts. For example, in the section 'Das Rüpelspiel', Nabl describes a lively scene at a mountain inn between a couple of tourists from the city, and a lively group of thirsty woodcutters ('Holzknechte'). The scene is brought to life by the widespread use of Styrian dialect, as well as the insertion of a number of authentic folk songs, which serve to characterize the locals as cheerful, vitalistic and, at the same time, hardier and less inhibited than the

urban visitors.<sup>326</sup> This especially true of the male tourist, whom the narrator refers to simply as the ‘Stadtherr’. This intentionally disagreeable character indirectly insults an elderly hunter, attributing his disfigured nose, the result of a youthful brawl, to a contagious illness, and later loses his cool when the woodcutters attempt to involve him in one of their improvised, bawdy songs: ‘Es san insa zwoa’.<sup>327</sup> The contrast suggested here between town and country dwellers reproduces one of the clichés of uncritical *Heimat* literature, and thereby, unfortunately, distances the *Steirische Lebenswanderung* substantially from Nabl’s more critical earlier fiction.<sup>328</sup> However, Nabl’s implicit promotion of the value of provincial life over that of the modern city, evident not only here but throughout the work, always maintains its politically detached, often acutely personal stance. This might not allow it to compete with his more sophisticated early prose but does demonstrate that the text profits from being read in the context of similar *Heimat* books from the period, like those of Mell and Kloepfer. Doing so makes it clear that some apparently unpolitical works are much less deserving of the definition than others.

The majority of Nabl’s fiction written and published from the mid-1930s onwards is characterized, like the *Steirische Lebenswanderung*, by a significant distance from the

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<sup>326</sup> When Nabl introduced his friend, the ‘Volkskundler’, Viktor von Geramb, to the real-life models for the singing woodcutters in ‘Das Rüpelspiel’, Geramb wrote their songs down out of ethnological interest. See Nabl, ‘Wege mit Viktor von Geramb’ in *Die Zweite Heimat*, pp. 109-115 (p. 112). See also Doppler, pp. 165-166.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. SL, pp. 85-88.

<sup>328</sup> See Chapter 4 above.

cultural-political issues of the time.<sup>329</sup> Moreover, it is striking how little new material the author produced under the National Socialist regime: from 1938 until 1945 the only new work published was the short story ‘Mein Onkel Barnabas’ (1944), the fictional re-working of a childhood memory.<sup>330</sup> It seems, then, that there was a considerable gap between the actual content of Nabl’s writing and the way in which it was received under National Socialism. Aside from the expectations arising from the institutional context of its publication, and the well-documented eclecticism of National Socialist ideology, though, can the appropriation of Nabl’s works by the Nazis also be explained by internal literary factors?<sup>331</sup>

Previous attempts to answer this question have focused their attentions on the novella *Der Fund*, the text by Nabl with the most problematic relationship to fascist ideology.<sup>332</sup> In contrast to the status of some of Nabl’s earlier fiction in the period, *Der Fund* was greeted with unanimous critical enthusiasm on its publication, so much so, in fact, that a reader from Nabl’s publisher, Carl Schünemann, wrote to him saying:

Wir haben lange kein Buch im Verlag gehabt, das so eindeutig bejaht worden ist wie Ihr Werk, und immer wieder klingt die Befriedigung darüber durch, dass Sie sich mit dieser

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<sup>329</sup> Nearly all of the short prose texts later compiled to create the volume *Johannes Krantz: Erzählungen in einem Rahmen* date back to this period. For a detailed treatment of the composition of *Johannes Krantz* in its various versions see Schmutzhard, pp. 11-21.

<sup>330</sup> This text was first published in the NS Journal *Das Innere Reich* (1943/44). See Nabl, ‘Werkverzeichnis’, p. 1341.

<sup>331</sup> Cf. Amann, ‘Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?’, p. 125.

<sup>332</sup> See Holzner, ‘Anerkennung und Kritik bürgerlicher Lebensformen in Franz Nabls Erzählung „Der Fund“’, pp. 83-98 and Amann, ‘Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?’, pp. 127-129.

Erzählung endlich zu einer positiven Haltung dem Leben und namentlich dem Verfall der bürgerlichen Welt gegenüber durchgerungen hätten.<sup>333</sup>

Set in the economic depression following the First World War, *Der Fund* recounts the story of an ex-army officer, now out of work and living an impoverished existence in a makeshift allotment shack. One evening, he finds a wallet, belonging to the local mayor, which contains paperwork documenting the latter's crooked dealings. Without prying into its contents, the ex-soldier returns the wallet to its owner, who becomes convinced that the finder is now privy to his crimes. He therefore, offers him a job, first in the municipal offices, and soon thereafter as his personal secretary, so that he can better control him. To this end, the mayor also invites him to dine regularly at home with him and his daughter and eventually decides that she must break-off her engagement to a local journalist and marry the war veteran. Shocked at her father's attempt to exploit her, she tells her rather disagreeable fiancé, a journalist for a Social Democratic newspaper, who, rather than supporting her, investigates himself in an attempt to gain influence over her father. When the veteran finds out about this mess from the mayor's daughter, to whom he is attracted, he vows to defend her honour, by confronting her scheming fiancé. When

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<sup>333</sup> See unpublished letter from Carl Schünemann Verlag to Nabl, 10 February 1938 in NN/FNI, Korrespondenz, IV/35. In the same letter, the publishers explain their intention to suppress the publication of Nabl's early novella 'Dokument' because of fears surrounding the 'Lebensstimmung, die in ihr zum Ausdruck kommt', arguing that the reading public would regard the narrator-protagonist as 'ungesund'. The Schünemann Verlag was also behind the re-titling of *Das Grab des Lebendigen* as *Die Ortliebschen Frauen* for similar reasons. See the long series of letters from Schünemann to Nabl from 7 July 1936- 21 September 1936 in NN/FNI, Korrespondenz, IV/35 and also Arlt, pp. 116-117. For an example of the critical reception of *Der Fund* see Helmut Langenbucher, 'Franz Nabl', *Rheinische Landeszeitung* (Düsseldorf, 14 August 1938), who concludes: 'Hier [...] ist es die Unerbittlichkeit und Hellsichtigkeit der Menschenkenntnis und der Enthüllung jeglicher Lebenslüge, die den Dichter Franz Nabl als einen sicheren "Entlarver alles Bürgerlichen", sofern mit dieser Bürgerlichkeit die Unfruchtbarkeit einer nur auf persönliche Sicherheit und Wohlfahrt bedachter Lebenshaltung ist, zeigen, und damit als einen Dichter, dem gerade in unserer heutigen Zeit eine besondere Bedeutung zukommt.'

he does so, the journalist insults and physically bests him. In response, the ex-officer pays him a second visit and, when the journalist refuses to cooperate for the second time, murders him. At trial, he is treated leniently, being condemned only for manslaughter. After serving less than a third of his sentence, a significant change in the political leadership occurs ('Nachdem der Sekretär etwa den dritten Teil seiner Kerkerhaft verbüßt hatte, vollzog sich der seit langem erwartete, nun nicht mehr aufzuhaltende Wechsel der herrschenden Machthaber', AW I, 277-278) and he is released. He visits the mayor's daughter, whose father is now an invalid, and asks for her hand. She refuses, because of her duty to her father, but when he dies after another stroke, nothing else stands in the way of a happy ending.

Critical responses to this text have focused on the narrative treatment of its central ethical problem: the protagonist of the story commits a murder in cold blood and is neither condemned nor criticized by the narrator. Thus, as Holzner argues, the novella allows itself to be read as a justification of acts of radical violence.<sup>334</sup> It not only fails to resist appropriation by National Socialism, but actively places itself in the service of Nazi ideology. The ex-officer represents forgotten values of vitality and heroism, and does not hesitate to exterminate his enemy, once he has decided that they are vermin. Moments before shooting the journalist dead, for example, he exclaims: 'mit einer Bestie kämpft man nicht. Eine Bestie macht man unschädlich' (AW I, 269). With the value of historical

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<sup>334</sup> See Holzner, 'Anerkennung und Kritik bürgerlicher Lebensformen in Franz Nabls Erzählung „Der Fund“', p. 92.

hindsight, it seems incredible that this act wins him public support rather than widespread outrage:

Er rückte mit einem Schlag in den Mittelpunkt der öffentlichen Aufmerksamkeit und, trotz seiner Tat, in den Mittelpunkt des öffentlichen Wohlwollens. Die Stimmung für den ermordeten Schriftleiter, von Anfang an wenig teilnahmsvoll, gestaltete sich während der Verhandlung immer ungünstiger und schlug zuletzt in unverhohlene Abneigung um. Durch seine Enthüllungen, die er freilich nicht immer um der guten Sache willen betrieb, sondern oft nur aus Eitelkeit und Freude am Handwerk, hatte er sich in der Stadt viele Feinde geschaffen; was von Zeugen über seine höchst ausschweifende Lebensweise vorgebracht wurde, vermochte ihn in kein besseres Licht zu rücken, im Gegenteil, es umgab seine Braut, die Tochter des Bürgermeisters, mit einem milden Schimmer des Martyriums und verklärte die Tat des Sekretärs zu einer ritterlichen, befreienden Handlung. (AW I, 277)

On closer analysis, though, this key section of the novella actually suggests that critics who have condemned Nabl's narrative stance as unforgivably neutral and, thus, as inherently conducive to ideological appropriation, are guilty of over-simplification.<sup>335</sup>

The ex-officer clearly benefits from the unpopularity of the man he has killed, and therefore from the egotism of a general public, which is crucially also shown to be readily accepting of violence. Furthermore, while the narrator does not speak out against the murderer here, he hardly portrays his most vehement supporters, who call for him to be pardoned and later riot on the streets, in a positive light:

Der Beifall der Zuhörerschaft, in den sich einzelne Rufe nach völliger Freisprechung mischten, war so lärmend, daß der Vorsitzende mit der Räumung des Saales drohte. Lediglich in den Straßen der Stadt veranstalteten kleinere Gruppen lichtscheuer Gestalten unter gellenden Pfiffen und Steinwürfen gegen die Scheiben besonders üppig und

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<sup>335</sup> Cf. esp. Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?', pp. 128-129.

aufreizend ausgestatteter Geschäftsauslagen Kundgebungen gegen den ihnen mißliebigen Rechtsspruch. (AW I, 277)

The opportunism and resentment of the masses here, who exploit the situation in order to vent their pent-up anger on the well-stocked shop windows of the town, strongly resembles that of the Nazi thugs who would ransack Jewish-owned property on the infamous ‘Reichskristallnacht’, only a year after the text’s publication. In this sense, the novella appears to illustrate some of the central desires and frustrations of contemporary society.

Indeed, the glorification of murder in the text might also be understood in this way: both society and the narrator approve of the protagonist’s crime because it realizes one of modern culture’s long-suppressed secret fantasies.<sup>336</sup> Thus, while the ex-officer’s justification of his clinical violence is compatible with National Socialism, it also echoes the words of the narrator-protagonist of Nabl’s ‘Dokument’, written over twenty-five years earlier: ‘Es ist vollbracht. [...] ... denn ich habe einen Menschen erschlagen. Den Kastellan. Aber er war eine Bestie. Er hat nicht unter die Menschen gehört’ (FE, 144). For the insane narrator-protagonist of ‘Dokument’, Herr Daniel, this deed emerges from a personal philosophy which sees murder as ‘das natürlichste aller Dinge. Er ist Hilfe und Befreiung. [...] die letzte und herrlichste Äußerung menschlicher Kraft und Würde’ (FE, 114).<sup>337</sup> When the public in *Der Fund* view the murder of the scheming journalist by the

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<sup>336</sup> For a broader discussion of literary murder as an expression of man’s hidden fantasies see Ritchie Robertson, ‘Every Man a Murderer?’, pp. 5-22 (pp. 8-10).

<sup>337</sup> See Chapter 1 above.

ex-officer as chivalric and liberating, Nabl reveals that empathy with the desire to murder is latent in society and is not restricted to the minds of madmen like Herr Daniel.

While it is true that Nabl's narrative stance in the text makes little attempt to portray this as a warning, or to pass a distanced moral judgement on the events, this hardly suffices to allow the author to be criticized for inviting a pro-fascist interpretation.<sup>338</sup> Quite apart from the elementary confusion of author and narrator inherent in this type of argument, if it is taken to its logical conclusion, then the tension found in all good fiction, which demands that the reader reflects upon and interprets what is being read, would be lost entirely. The provocative nature of the novella derives not from its critical reflection of social reality but instead in its controversial expression of central aspects of popular ideology. This guaranteed both its contemporary success and also constitutes its cultural-historical interest for readers today. Rather than offering the serious critical realism of Nabl's best early work, *Der Fund* is still worth reading for what it tells us about the conservative mentality of late 1930s Austria. Its weakness is perhaps, in one limited sense, its strength.

## Conclusion

In the course of this chapter, it has become clear that even Nabl's later texts provide scant literary evidence for the damaging, periodic assertions that he was a fascist writer. Indeed, an analysis of his work ranging from *Die Galgenfrist* to the literary texts written

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<sup>338</sup> Cf. Amann, 'Franz Nabl – Politischer Dichter wider Willen?', p. 129.

and published under National Socialism has repeatedly revealed that Nabl's writing, perhaps with the exception of *Der Fund*, was politically innocuous and largely concerned with personal and private issues. His later work has been shown to primarily address questions about how to find meaning in life, in *Die Galgenfrist* and *Trieschübel*, or to re-work memories of childhood, for example in a number of stories later collected in *Johannes Krantz*, or important episodes from his adult life, as in the semi-autobiographical *Steirische Lebenswanderung*. Even the socio-political comedy, *Schichtwechsel* is largely focused on inter-personal relationships, with contemporary political issues really only forming the context of the plot.

At the same time, the close scrutiny of Nabl's life in this chapter, the uncovering of the political and ideological views of his close friends and colleagues, the revealing of the institutional context of his work's publication and the degree of his association with National Socialism, allow us to be quite clear about Nabl's active involvement in the cultural-politics of the Nazi regime. Contrary to his later claims, Nabl's actions both prior to the Anschluss, and afterwards disprove the self-perpetuated myth that he always distanced himself from politics. While many of his decisions were possibly naïve and almost certainly based more on the desire for success than on ideological conviction, it is impossible to ignore the fact that many of his actions were indisputably political. His resignation from the Viennese PEN club and active engagement for the *Österreichische Kulturkorrespondenz* before the Anschluss, or, later on, his reading tours of the Third Reich, and his acceptance of plaudits and prizes, such as the Mozart-Prize in 1938 or his

honorary doctorate in 1943, all helped to buy Nabl success and recognition, at the price of helping to legitimize and support the Nazi regime.

Despite this, it is necessary to remember that Nabl's behaviour was, despite the distorting effect of a post-war canon constructed largely of exiled Austrian writers, actually by far the most common response to the politicization of Austrian letters during the 1930s. Indeed, compared to other writers from the same conservative milieu whose reputations have been re-established, or are on the way to rehabilitation, Nabl's ideological commitment to National Socialism appears rather mild. The most prominent example, of course, is Heimito von Doderer, whose work has been widely celebrated even though the author was a member of the Nazi party from 1933, and even chose to live in Dachau from 1936-1938.<sup>339</sup> Doderer's post-war prestige could, it seems, be established because he claimed to have soon rejected National Socialism, and because his major novels were published only in the 1950s.<sup>340</sup> One-third of Doderer's important novel *Die Dämonen*, though, already existed in draft by 1936 and was intended to portray

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<sup>339</sup> On Doderer see Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, 'Heimito von Doderer: Rückzug auf die Sprache' in *Österreichische Literatur der dreißiger Jahre: Ideologische Verhältnisse, Institutionelle Voraussetzungen, Fallstudien*, ed. by Klaus Amann and Albert Berger (Böhlau: Vienna, 1985), pp. 291-301 and Hans Eichner, 'Heimito von Doderer, die Politik und die Juden' in Donald G. Daviau (ed.), *Austrian Writers and the Anschluss: Understanding the Past – Overcoming the Past* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne, 1991), pp. 224-233.

<sup>340</sup> Wolfgang Fleischer's major biography has revealed that Doderer later sought to falsify his past, intentionally distorting his real relationship to National Socialism. For example, see Fleischer, *Das verleugnete Leben. Die Biographie des Heimito von Doderer* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1996), p. 267, p. 344, and esp. pp. 347-349. Fleischer also demonstrates that the various rumours surrounding Doderer's disillusionment with the Nazi party in 1938 i.e. that he officially left the party or that he burned his membership book have no basis in fact. When Doderer returned to Austria, he remained a party member and promptly transferred his registration from the Dachau 'Ortsgruppe' to the corresponding Viennese section. See p. 284.

a 'Theatrum Judaicum', an anti-Semitic novel of society.<sup>341</sup> In contrast to Doderer, Nabl's acceptance and support of National Socialism was much less clear cut, and his major novels were written long before National Socialism appeared on the horizon. In this sense, then, there is no reason that Nabl's early work should be forgotten because of his less than exemplary behaviour before and during National Socialism. At the same time, though, it is necessary to be fully aware of the shortcomings of his later life and ultimately the weaker work produced during this phase of his career. It is only by doing so that scholars can reach a balanced view of Nabl's writing, rather than attempting to extricate his work from its cultural-political context by eulogizing him as a naïve *Heimat* author, which he wasn't, or instead tarnishing his entire literary oeuvre by an over-zealous insistence on his personal failings prior to and during National Socialism.

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<sup>341</sup> Quoted from an unpublished part of Doderer's *Commentari*, 26 July 1936 in *Heimite von Doderer, Albert Paris Gütersloh, Briefwechsel 1928-1962*, ed. by Reinhold Treml (Munich: Biederstein, 1986), p. 37 and also in Fleischer, *Das verleugnete Leben*, p. 234. Fleischer notes that much of Doderer's 1936 draft of his 'Theatrum Judaicum' appears unchanged in the final 1956 version of *Die Dämonen*.

## Conclusion

For observers acquainted only with the conventional post-war view of Franz Nabl as a conservative, anachronistic writer of only regional importance, the most puzzling aspect of his reception is surely his association in the early 1970s with the avant-garde writers of the ‘Grazer Gruppe’. After being introduced to Alfred Kolleritsch, founder and editor of the journal *manuskripte*, and the dramatist Wolfgang Bauer during a visit from his friend, the older author Alois Hergouth, Nabl soon became acquainted with others connected to the group. These included the academic sociologist and writer Gunter Falk, the novelist Gerhard Roth and eventually also Peter Handke, who travelled specially from Germany to Graz in order to honour Nabl on his ninetieth birthday in 1973.<sup>342</sup> On the surface, there seems little that could connect this young generation of self-consciously modern, often experimental authors to a marginalized, all but forgotten literary figure such as Nabl. On closer inspection, however, it is likely that in paying homage to Nabl, the Graz writers sought to establish a connection, albeit loosely, to Austrian literary tradition. Given the timing of their first contact, it is possible to surmise that this occurred, at least for Handke, at a moment when, with the publication of *Wunschloses Unglück*, the direction of his own fiction was gradually turning back towards more established modes and concerns. But why should they choose Nabl for this purpose?

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<sup>342</sup> See Franz Nabl, ‘Die Jugend und Ich’, *Kronenzeitung* (14 July 1973) and Gerhard Roth, ‘Über den 90jährigen Franz Nabl’, pp. 153-154.

While it is both understandable and common that younger writers should seek to establish links between themselves and their literary heritage, it is important to bear in mind that one's own reputation can easily suffer if the prestige of the purported literary ancestors is either overwhelming or not far enough removed. In this sense, had the Graz writers claimed themselves as direct literary heirs of Viennese modernism, they might perhaps, like Nabl himself, have struggled to emerge from the shadows cast by the writers of Jung-Wien. Yet for a group of progressive writers based in Graz, the established literary figures close at hand, such as the icon of the Styrian province and trivial *Heimatkunst*, Peter Rosegger, hardly offered an ideal alternative.<sup>343</sup> In this context, Nabl must have appeared a sensible choice, not famous (nor as yet notorious) enough to overshadow the Graz writers, but still a figure who enabled them to trace their heritage back to a less prominent, de-centred strand of the Austrian literary tradition, guaranteeing themselves a literary birthright without being obscured by the great prestige of Vienna's belle époque. As the argument of my thesis has repeatedly demonstrated, though, the complex, alternative narrative of Austrian literary history to which Nabl's writing belongs is actually much more distinguished and subversive than either Handke or Roth were probably aware. By pointing to Nabl, the Graz writers were, in fact, placing themselves, with more justification than is immediately obvious, in a long overlooked, vastly underrated line of Austrian writers whose work is as crucial as any to understanding the nation's literary past.

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<sup>343</sup> On Rosegger's status as a Styrian icon see Baur, 'Peter Rosegger in der Wissenschaft', p. 12.

After the surprisingly contemporary literary beginnings discussed in the opening chapter, which reveal significant overlaps with works by modernists, such as Kafka and Schnitzler, Nabl soon progressed to his major theme: the problems of family life. In his substantial and important novels *Ödhof* and *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, analysed in Chapters Two and Three, he made challenging and significant contributions to a longstanding, but too often unrecognized, tradition of critical realism in Austrian literature going back to Saar and Anzengruber and, albeit less directly, to Nestroy and Stifter, which engages repeatedly and unflinchingly with the pathological structures that can emerge within the family unit. For these novels alone, Nabl deserves to be re-discovered and read today.

Moreover, while both of these texts are clearly set apart from the *Heimatroman* with which Nabl has too often been incorrectly associated, others such as 'Pastorale' and *Der Tag der Erkenntnis*, examined alongside *Ödhof* in Chapter Four, actively engage with and subvert the stereotypical conventions of the genre. In this way, they indicate that Nabl's writing also belongs to the broader body of Austrian writing which responds critically to the notion of *Heimat*. As the analyses of Chapter Four illustrate, this corpus is not limited to 'Anti-Heimat' novels by writers like Franz Innerhofer, and other more subtle post-war critiques of *Heimat* by authors such as Handke, Thomas Bernhard or Norbert Gstrein. Instead, it also already exists in various forms in the late nineteenth century, during the very period where the trivial *Heimat* novel itself was at its zenith. Nabl's writing, then, teaches us to be more wary in condemning *Heimat* literature, by revealing that much fiction denigrated by association with it is actually far from trivial.

However, as my final chapter reveals, not all of Nabl's oeuvre lives up to the high standards set by his earlier work. His fictional and journalistic writing immediately before, during and after National Socialism is weaker and much less memorable. Nevertheless, as comparisons with other authors tarnished by their associations with the Nazis, such as Karl Heinrich Waggerl, Hans Klopfer and Max Mell, illustrate, Nabl's literary productions during this period were, for all their shortcomings, never pernicious or even openly supportive of fascist ideology.

While the extent of Nabl's collaboration with Hitler's regime and its cultural-political institutions outlined in Chapter Five must rightly damage his reputation, this should not, however, be allowed to prevent scholars from appreciating and engaging with the undoubted merits of his earlier fiction. For Nabl's works are not only worth reading for their own sake, but also for the lessons they can teach us, and the difficult questions they provoke. Scrutinizing Nabl's writing in its complex array of contexts make us alive to the perils of literary history and guards us against overly schematic approaches to our literary past. The critical investigations undertaken in this thesis demonstrate that attempts to capture the essence of a literary tradition in binary oppositions, such as modernism versus realism, high culture versus low culture, aesthetically progressive versus anachronistic, serve to produce distortion and that the idea of a unitary grand literary tradition itself is fundamentally flawed. If accepting this allows scholars to return to the work of forgotten writers of Nabl's calibre, re-discovering not only their texts but the problems that studying them unearth, then it is a lesson worth learning.

### Appendix: Franz Nabl's Life and Work<sup>344</sup>

1883 Franz Nabl born on 16 July in Loučeň, Bohemia. Parents: Franz Nabl, 'Domänenrat' in the service of the House of Thurn and Taxis, and Antonia Nabl (née Unterstein).

1886 Family moves to Vienna.

1888 Nabl's father purchases the 'Gstettenhof', a country estate in the Türnitz Valley in Lower Austria. Nabl spends his summers here until the sale of the estate in 1901. The 'Gstettenhof' and its surrounding landscape make a deep impression on the young Nabl, frequently echoed in his later literary work.

1891 Family moves to Helenental, near Baden bei Wien.

1893 After receiving his primary education ('Volksschule') from a private tutor, Nabl passes the entrance exam for the Realgymnasium in Baden and begins his secondary education.

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<sup>344</sup> The information provided here is a revised and updated version of the biographical overview printed as 'Franz Nabl: Leben und Werdegang' in *Studium Generale*, 24 (1971), 1373-1376. My account draws on other sources published later, especially Nabl's biographical work *Meine Wohnstätten* and Uwe Baur and Karin Gradwohl-Schlacher's indispensable recent guide to the National Socialist literary system in Styria, *Literatur in Österreich, 1938-1945. Handbuch eines literarischen Systems* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2008), I: *Steiermark*. On Nabl, pp. 254-262.

- 1895 Family moves back to Vienna (Wiedner Hauptstraße).
- 1900 Separation of Nabl's parents. Franz returns with his mother to Baden.
- 1902 Matura in Baden. Nabl matriculates as a Law student at the University of Vienna.
- 1904 After four semesters of Law, Nabl switches faculty and enrolls as a student of German literature ('Germanistik').
- 1905 Nabl's publishes his first work, the one-act play *Noch einmal....!* It is followed in the same year by the three-act play *Weihe*. The publishing costs are paid by Nabl's father, despite his distaste for his son's literary ambitions.
- 1906 Nabl's comedy *Die Geschwister Hagelbauer* is performed at the Kleines Schauspielhaus in Vienna, where Felix Dörmann, a friend of Nabl's fiancée's brother, was employed as dramatic advisor.
- 1907 Marriage to Hermenegild Lampa; moves to Enzesfeld an der Triesting; beginning of correspondence with Arthur Schnitzler.

- 1908 Debut novel *Hans Jäckels erstes Liebesjahr* published by Egon Fleischel in Berlin on Schnitzler's recommendation.
- 1911 *Ödhof. Bilder aus den Kreisen der Familie Arlet* published to critical acclaim; Nabl returns to Vienna because of his father's illness.
- 1913 Death of Nabl's father; now in possession of a sizeable inheritance, Nabl moves back to Baden (Hildegardgasse), where he soon purchases a house (Hochstraße).
- 1914 Outbreak of World War One. Nabl exempted from military service because of the combined consequences of a childhood bout of typhoid and an old football injury.
- 1914
- 1915 Work on *Vaterhaus*, the first volume of a planned trilogy, *Menschenwerdung*. The social upheavals of the war prompted Nabl to abandon the project. *Vaterhaus* was first published in its entirety posthumously in 1974.
- 1915
- 1917 Work on *Das Grab des Lebendigen*, published by Egon Fleischel in 1917.
- 1921 *Die Galgenfrist* published by Egon Fleischel. Nabl receives the Bauernfeld-Preis together with Robert Hohlbaum and Julius von Ludassy.

- 1924 Nabl's brother, Arnold, loses their paternal inheritance as a result of ill-advised business speculations. Nabl moves to Graz, taking up a post at the *Grazer Tagblatt*. Here he becomes initiated into the informal 'Südmark-Runde'. Other members include Viktor von Geramb, Hans von Dettelbach, Norbert Langer, Hans Kloepfer, Emil Ertl, Josef Papesch and Friedrich Pock.
- 1925 1 October: first performances of *Trieschübel* at Zentraltheater Berlin, Stadttheater Potsdam and Stadttheater Halle a. d. Saale.
- 1927 *Trieschübel* now performed at over 80 German theatres, as well as in Graz (October 1926), Klagenfurt and at Vienna's Burgtheater (April 1927). Its commercial success enables Nabl to resign from his post at the *Grazer Tagblatt* and return to Baden.
- 1929 2 February: first performance of comedy *Schichtwechsel*. The play failed to follow-up the success of *Trieschübel* and Nabl returned to prose fiction with renewed focus, publishing in various newspapers and periodicals, such as the respected *Frankfurter Zeitung* and Josef Papesch's nationalist periodical *Alpenländische Monatshefte*.

- 1933 Hitler's rise to power in Germany. 7 July: Nabl formally resigns from Viennese PEN club, along with a wave of other writers from the provinces, refusing to support the decision, taken at the AGM of the Viennese PEN club, to make formal amends for its silence at the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International PEN club in Dubrovnik (25-28 May) over the treatment of its members in Nazi Germany.
- 1934 Nabl moves to Graz (Laimburggasse) where he lived until his death.
- 1935 Book publication of *Ein Mann von Gestern* (first printed in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 1933); publication of *Das Meteor* marking the beginning of Nabl's association with the Schünemann Verlag in Bremen, where the majority his major works would be re-issued.
- 1936 *Das Grab des Lebendigen* re-issued as *Die Ortliebschen Frauen*; Nabl receives the Ring des Eckart-Bundes.
- 1936-
- 1937 Nabl joins the Bund deutscher Schriftsteller Österreichs (BdSÖ).
- 1937 Publication of *Der Fund*; death of Nabl's first wife.

- 1938 Annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany; publication of the *Steirische Lebenswanderung*; Nabl receives the Mozartpreis der Hamburger Goethestiftung.
- 1940 Nabl is re-married (to Ilse Meltzer) and takes up a post at the *Grazer Tagespost* as theatre reviewer. First dissertation on Nabl's work written: Elisabeth Tallner, 'Franz Nabls Familienromane' (University of Prague).
- 1943 Nabl awarded honorary doctorate by University of Graz. Among the personal congratulants are Josef Goebbels and Hanns Johst.
- 1945 13 February: Nabl's house in Graz damaged by bombs, forcing temporary evacuation.
- 1947 Nabl's membership of Austrian PEN club renewed at the club's first post-war meeting.
- 1948 *Johannes Krantz: Erzählungen in einem Rahmen* published.
- 1952 Literatur-Preis der Stadt Wien.
- 1953 70th birthday; publication of *Das Rasenstück*; Rosegger-Preis des Landes Steiermark.

- 1957 Kunstpreis der Republik Österreich.
- 1958 75th birthday; awarded Ehrenring des Landes Steiermark.
- 1959 Made honorary member of Austrian PEN club.
- 1962 Publication of *Der erloschene Stern*, the first in a series of autobiographical works.
- 1963 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, honoured by various awards including Adalbert Stifter Medaille, Ehrenring der Stadt Graz, honorary membership of Steirischer Schriftstellerverband. Publication of *Die Zweite Heimat*.
- 1965 Four-volume edition of *Ausgewählte Werke* issued by Verlag Kremayr & Scheriau, Vienna.
- 1969 Awarded Österreichisches Ehrenzeichen für Wissenschaft und Kunst.
- 1971 Special volume of journal *Studium Generale* devoted to Nabl's work.
- 1973 Publication of *Spiel mit Blättern*.

- 1974 19 January, death in Graz. Publication of novel *Vaterhaus* (written 1914/15).
- 1975 Publication of *Meine Wohnstätten*. Volume of Nabl's *Frühe Erzählungen* published, edited by Peter Handke with an afterword by Gerhard Roth. Inaugural Franz-Nabl-Preis der Stadt Graz awarded to Elias Canetti, thereafter bi-annually.
- 1979 First symposium on Nabl held at University of Graz with the aim of stimulating academic interest in his work. Proceedings later published as *Über Franz Nabl* (1980). Resonance in Austrian press is dominated by the issue of Nabl's relationship to National Socialism.
- 1990 Franz-Nabl-Institut für Literaturforschung in Graz opens its doors. Despite its name, however, the institution's main focus is on Styrian literature in its international context, rather than on Nabl's life and work. This situation continues to form a source of debate and public antagonism.

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